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at last,

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THE WIRE

A member of the Namara Group

Issue 93, November 1991, £1.95, \$5.00 ISBN 0952-0646

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Promotion consultant: Namara Creative PR, MSP Public Relations Ltd. Typesetting by MC Typeset Ltd, Woodhouse, Rochester. Printing by Garrett Dickenson Print Limited, Rotherham, England.
The Wire is distributed in the UK by Magellan Distribution Ltd, Cister Court, 22-26 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

In the US, *The Wire* is published for \$10.00 per year by The Wire Magazine Ltd, Unit G&H, 115 Cleveland Street, London W1, England. 2nd Class Postage is paid at Jamaica NY 11433.
Postmaster: please send address changes to: The Wire, PO Box 754, Manhattan, NY 10036-0754, USA. Tel/Fax 212 427 1826

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NOW'S presents . . . THE NEWS SECTION THE TIME

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• **GUITARIST GARY** Boyle, hero to a generation of fusion nuts, travels around the UK with German bass virtuoso (and ECM stalwart) Eberhard Weber, accompanied by Peter Jacobson on piano and Caroline Boden on drums. The Boyle/Weber reunion has taken some time to effect — 20 years to be precise. See *In Town Tonight* for tour dates.

• **JAMAICAN JAZZ** pianist Monty Alexander stops off at the Queen Elizabeth Hall (Nov 7) as part of the Contemporary Music Network tour. Reflecting the West Indian influence on jazz, his American band Ivory and Steel team up with an eclectic mix of British jazz musicians united by their Caribbean background. See *In Town Tonight* for regional dates.

• **THE JAPAN** Festival brings with it, along with many other excellent exports, the alto saxophonist Sadao Watanabe. Performing for the first time in the UK and accompanied by his own group, he takes his neo-soulful mellow tone to Ronnie Scott's Club (18-23) and The Royal Festival Hall (25).

EDITOR SPEAKS

THIS ISSUE brings a few new changes to the team at *The Wire*. Joining us this month are Mark Sinker, one of the most diligent of contributors in the past, a former associate editor and now full-time Assistant Editor. I'm delighted that one of the most provocative and entertaining of writers will be with us on a daily basis.

We also have a new advertising manager, Sue Kemal. Prospective advertisers are advised to call her now. If not, never mind; she'll be calling you.

The new *The Wire* continues space. Next month is our massive double issue for Christmas and the New Year, hopefully our biggest ever. See you then. In the meantime, on with this one . . .

R D COOK



A competitor gets his practice in early.

GET ON THE GOOD FOOT

• **THE COMPETITORS** in the 1991 National Jazz Dance Competition will be limbering up inside Camden's Jazz Cafe on the afternoon of Sunday 24th November. The event, which starts with a parade down the High Street from

Chalk Farm Station, will be judged by a host of celebrities and recorded for broadcast by London's Kiss FM and Channel 4. The proceedings run from 12.30-7pm and admission is £5.00. Details from Edge Promotions on: 081 319 4202.

• **RECORD INDUSTRY** claims about the effects of home taping have been greatly exaggerated, reports a new survey published in October's *Whirl Magazine*. The report commissioned by the Consumers' Association, gives support to arguments put forward by The Home Taping Rights Campaign which opposes the introduction of an EC tax on blank tapes.

• **A TIME** limit is the only restriction being placed on musicians taking part in this year's Total Music Meeting. The event, presented by FMP, allows for any combination of up to nine players to take the stage for thirty minutes at a time, ensuring a continuous flow of free music from the likes of Peter Brötzmann, Evan Parker, Rashid Ali and Fred Hopkins. Uniting American and European exponents of the Free Jazz tradition, the meeting takes place at the Haus Der Jungen Talente, Berlin from Oct 31-Nov 2.

• **IMPLACABLE DUTCH** anarchists The Ex have teamed up with improvising New York cellist Tom Cora, in a collaboration unusual even by their far-reaching standards. *Scrubbing At The Lack*, recorded earlier this year, is put out as a joint-release between Ex Records and RecRec. The third in their 1991 thematic single-release project — a version of a Hungarian folk song — is also out now, including the usual bundle of booklets, posters, special packages and other surprises. Further information, and details of their November tour from: The Ex, PO Box 635, 1000 AP Amsterdam.

NOW'S THE TIME

• BIG PRIZES are up for grabs in The National Big Band Competition organised by BBC Radio 2. There are prizes for Senior and Junior Bands, Soloists, Composers and Arrangers. Compositions must be original and the winning bands and soloists will be invited to record a broadcast for transmission on Radio 2 next year. Closing date for entries is November 30th and further details can be obtained from Ray Harvey, Producer Radio 2 Music Dept., Rm 405 Western House, London W1A 1AA.

• THE 29TH Belfast Festival at Queens has all the regular attractions of an arts festival with a huge selection of opera, dance, film and drama. To accompany Mozart's 200th anniversary there's the best of the German classical tradition with music from Bach to Brahms and jazz from Barbara Dennerlein's Munich-based trio (14). Other jazz attractions include Bobby Watson (12); The Bill Frisell Band (13); Peanitos Hucko and the Anglo American All Stars (15), Sheila Jordan/Claudio Roditi and The Bill Mays Trio (16). The Festival runs from 2-23 November and details can be obtained from Festival Booking Office, 25 College Gdns, Belfast BT9 6BS.

• THE FIRST International Festival of Film and Television Operas has awarded Judith Weir's "Heaven Ablaze In His Breast" top prize of \$2,500. Both music and libretto were written by Scottish composer Weir around a story based on E.T.A. Hoffmann's complex and disturbing tale *The Sandman*.

• TAJ MAHAL, the great African American archivist, revivalist and entertainer, embarks upon a major European solo tour this month which culminates in a series of UK dates in November - Edinburgh Queen's Hall (1); Newcastle Riverside (2); London Town & Country (3), Norwich

The Waterfront (4), Manchester, International II (6) and Dublin Olympia (8). To coincide with the tour, a single "Don't Call Us" (featuring Daryl Hall and John Oates), from the recent hit album *Like Never Before*, has been released on Private Music.



Taj Mahal

• AFRICAN BLUESMAN Ali Farka Toure has recently received offers to record with Ry Cooder and to make a film with Taj Mahal. For the moment he's content to finish his UK tour playing Cambridge Exchange (1), Manchester Royton Assembly Hall (2) and Hull The Tower (3).

• BRIGHTON JAZZ Bop '91 features live performances from US vibesman Johnny Lytle and soulsters Danna Brown and Burne K Sharpe. With guest DJ's The Young Disciples, it's all happenin' on Friday November 22nd. Details from Baz Fe Jazz: 071 644 7552.

ARCHIVE ON THE MOVE

• THE ROYAL Philharmonic Orchestra is exposed! Fiona Hawthorne, their first pianist-in-residence, exhibits her impressions of the conductors, soloists and players at the Royal Festival Hall till November 17th. The exhibition is open daily from 10am-10pm, admission free.

• GUITARIST JOHN McLaughlin joins Indian percussionist Trilok Gurtu and bassist Dominique Di Piazza to form an acoustic trio. Their only UK appearance is on November 13th at the Royal Festival Hall. Details 071 928 8800

WINNERS!

• THE WINNER of our Point Blank Competition (issue 90) was Sanjiv Sachdev of London SE12. As well as his set of five blues CDs from the Point Blank catalogue he receives a T-shirt and a Point Blank hip flask. The runners-up are too numerous to list but we hope you've all enjoyed your sampler!

The response to our Wild Turkey competition (issue 91) was phenomenal. Despite formidable efforts from many who came up with totals in the high hundreds, there were just a few who managed to break through the one thousand barrier, including John Morton of Lewisham (1,525) and Clive Burrows of Whitchurch (1,160). But one man beat all the competition. We are pleased to announce that the lucky recipient of the superb Wild Turkey leather jacket is Graham Watson of Nottingham. He came up with a staggering 1,712 avian references. For all that effort, you deserve first prize. We wish you well to wear it!

NOW'S presents . . . THE NEWS SECTION THE TIME

• **VIC REEVES** has released an album; *I Will Care You*. With a canny eye on his discerning *Wire* audience, our favourite Northern Light Entertainer joins forces with Steve Beresford and his Orchestra – and allows Evan Parker, Harry Beckett, Tony Cox and Han Bennink to take solos in the music, which can be described, it says here, as "swing, house, croon, R&B, heavy metal, punk, triad, folk, unknown and so on."

• **ICEBREAKER**, THE young, electric new music band bring their version of minimalist funk to various venues throughout Britain. Energetic, assertive and loud, you can catch them in York Sir Jack Lyons Hall (27), Liverpool Christ's College (28) and Manchester RNCM (29). More dates in December.

• **PINSKI ZOO** members Jan Kopinski and Steve Iliffe present an evening of honed and unhampered jazz at the Prema Arts Centre, Gloucester on November 2nd. A blend of free jazz and heavy funk from this still undervalued contemporary duo. Details 0453 860 703.

• **B B KING** and Dianne Reeves are appearing at the Royal Albert Hall on Monday October 28th. Performing with an all-star 17 piece Big Band including Harry "Sweets" Edison, Robin Eubanks and Ralph Moore, this will be the only UK concert in the course of an extensive world tour. Tickets, 071 589 8212.

• **LEADING HINDU**-stani vocalist Parveen Sultana (with her exceptional singing range of 3.5 octaves!), begins her first major national UK tour when she performs with husband Dilshad Khan at the Purcell Room, 8pm, October 27th. Further information from the Asna Music Circuit on 081 742 9911.

• **NOW'S THE TIME** is the name of *The Wire's* News Section. But it is also the name for Assembly Direct's annual Autumn Jazz Event at Edinburgh's Queens Hall. Kicking off with the Freddie Hubbard Quartet on October 25th, the November dates are Taj Mahal (1); Steve Williamson Group (8); Peanuts Hucko All Stars (15); Sheila Jordan (22) and Brian Kellock (29), plus further dates in December. Details from 031 557 4446.

• **TWO WORLD** premieres, Edwin Roxburgh's Prelude and Toccata and Timothy Salter's Sonata No. 2 are to be included in Thalia Myers' piano recital at St John's, Smith Square on November 25th at 7.30 pm. For those unfamiliar with Thalia, her solo recordings include two albums of contemporary British works and the entire keyboard variations of Haydn. Details from 071 222 1061.

• **THE LONDON** Guitarist Show '91 runs from 2nd–3rd November at the Novotel International Centre, Hammersmith, London. Admission is £5.00 which includes entry into the Music Recording and Technology Show. As well as the two floors of exhibition stands, there'll be a number of live demonstration showcases to watch. Tickets and further information, 0353 663 577.

• **RUBBERNECK**, the magazine that deals with "Free", is absolutely FREE! Talking to the participants of Company Week, it gives space in the form of interviews and conversations to ideas about the unique challenges of improvised music. To obtain your copy send a large SAE to Rubberneck, 21 Denham Drive, Basingstoke, Hants RG22 6LT.

• **"DEATH DEFYING** The Eye" and "Ultramarine" tour as a double bill of dance and live music, featuring radical Northern improvisers Mary Oliver (of Feetackets) and Daniel Weaver (of Stockhausen and Walkman). Vocalist Oliver also works with kitchen utensils, trombone mute, balloons and mouth harp. The spectacle promises "contemporary violence, sacrifice and corrupt power". Details: 021 440 2522.



Handsome guys model handsome shirts: James Joseph, Julian Joseph, Orphy Robinson and Jean Toussaint try out *Wire* T's for size.

Photo: Clive Hunt.

in town tonight

Our choice of November's jazz gigs

* indicate other gigs at this venue are listed elsewhere on pp 4-6

Aberdeen Arts Centre: Boyle/Weber Qt (24). **Bath University** (0225 826 777): Monty Alexander (8). **Birmingham MAC** (021 440 4221): Barbara Dennerlein Trio (17); Symphony Hall (021 236 6030): Virtous/Garbarek/Enskine Trio (24). **Admiral Barley Hall** (021 414 5703): Geri Allen/Haden/Motian Trio & Louis Slavics Qt (29). **Bracknell South Hill Park** (0344 427 272): Monty Alexander (6), Jon Lloyd Qt (12), Geri Allen/Haden/Motian Trio & Louis Slavics Qt (25). **Bradford Alhambra Theatre:** Boyle/Weber Qt (1 Dec). **Brighton Gardner Centre** (0273 685 447): Geri Allen/Haden/Motian Trio & Louis Slavics Qt (23). **Bristol St George** (0272 230 339): John Surman (15). **Cambridge The Junction** (0223 412 600): Desperately Seeking Fusion (1); Dave Defries Qt (8); Alan Skidmore (15); Boyle/Weber Qt (29). **Edinburgh Queen's Hall** (0141 552 3223): Boyle/Weber Qt (23). **Exeter Arts Centre:** Boyle/Weber Qt (27). **Glasgow Royal Concert Hall:** Boyle/Weber Qt. **Hertfordshire Blue Note Club** (0442 242 827): Coup D'Etat (21), Old Ball Arts Centre (081 449 0048): Brian Edwards Trio (10); Jonathan Gee Trio (24). **Leeds Destitute Out** (0274 742 486): Jean Toussaint Qt (20). **Irish Centre** (0532 742 486): Barbara Dennerlein Trio (13); Geri Allen/Haden/Motian Trio & Louis Slavics Qt (28). **University** (0532 742 486): Jan Garbarek (23). **Manchester RNCM** (061 273 4504): John Surman (15); Geri Allen/Haden/Motian Trio (27); Band

On The Wall: Frank Williams Qt (14); Boyle/Weber Qt (28).

Newcastle Upon Tyne The Live Theatre (091 261 2694): Boyle/Weber Qt (25). **Southampton Gantry:** Frank Williams Qt (15); University (0703 593 741); Alan Skidmore/Lan Hammer (19); **Torver Swan Hall** (0703 593 672): Geri Allen/Haden/Motian Trio & Louis Slavics Qt (22). **St Albans Aranca** (0727 44488): John Surman Qt (22). **St Andrews Yvonne Hulme**: Boyle/Weber Qt (22).

In and around London: **Blow The Fuse, Kings Head N1** (0171 254 8935): Ian Shawl/Johnny Miller (10). **Jacksons Lane** (081 340 5226): Frank Williams Qt (16); Hope Augustus (23). **Jazz Cafe NW1** (071 284 4358): Zawinul Syndicate (1, 2); Rose Royce (5); Bee E King (7); Barbara Dennerlein Trio (16); Gil Scott-Heron (18-23); Abdullah Ibrahim & Ekaya (25-30). **Pianissimo Club N1** (071 241 4253): John Burgess/Roberto Bellarosa/Steve Noble (5). **John Law Qt (26)** **Red Rose Club N1** (071 263 7265); Jon Lloyd Qt (24). **The South Bank Complex** (071 928 8800): Take 6 (7); Monty Alexander (29). **John McLaughlin** (13); Jane Chapman (14). **John Surman** (17); Geri Allen/Haden/Motian Trio & The Louis Slavics Qt (21); Sadao Watanabe (25). **The Swan W6** (081 748 1043): John Burchett/Phil Minton & Mark Sanders/Pat Thomas (5); Paul Baylis/Jam le Baguie/Gus Garside (12); Roberto Bellarosa/Steve Noble/Billy Jenkins (19); Geoffrey Morgan/Matchless Bauck/Martin Blume (26). **St Martins** (071 379 4444): Penguin Cafe Orchestra (8-9); Mark Springer (23). **Town & Country NW5** (071 284 1221): Andy Sheppard - In Co-Motion (23). **World's End N4** (0171 328 8349): "706" (8).

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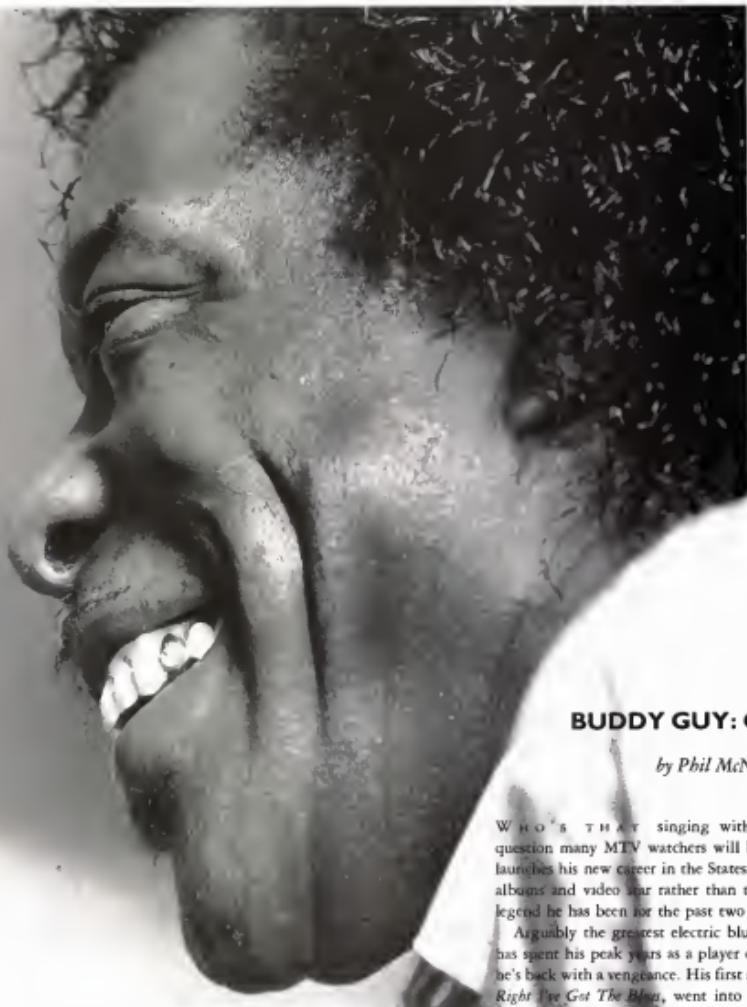
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THE TIME



BUDDY GUY: GUITARIST

by Phil McNeill

WHO'S THAT singing with Jeff Beck? That's the question many MTV watchers will be asking as Buddy Guy launches his new career in the States — as a successful singles, albums and video war rather than the struggling '60s blues legend he has been for the past two decades.

Arguably the greatest electric blues guitarist, Buddy Guy has spent his peak years as a player out in the cold. But now he's back with a vengeance. His first album for 12 years, *Dawn Right I've Got The Blues*, went into the Top 50 when it was released here in the summer, but in the States he needs that MTV audience, so the campaign is led by a single, and could even give Buddy Guy his first hit. "It's getting late in the day," he admits — but if John Lee Hooker can crash into the

NOW'S THE TIME

UK albums chart at number three in his 70s, why not Buddy Guy at 55?

The single is "Mustang Sally", one of two album tracks featuring Jeff Beck, with Beck's part recut to make him the featured soloist. In a way it's a desperate ploy, but that's how these things work in the 90s. Ever since Hooker's breakthrough with "The Healer", featuring Carlos Santana, and "I'm In The Mood" with Bonnie Raitt, any canny bluesman comes to the studio with a rock star or two in tow. Gary Moore's *Still Got The Blues* LP put Albert King on MTV, and the most unlikely success of the lot has been Chuck Berry's old pianist Johnnie Johnson, getting rave reviews for an avuncular album adored by Keith Richards and Eric Clapton, who also plays on Guy's LP.

Buddy Guy makes no bones about the importance of these guest stars in reviving the blues. "Eric is something special to me, man," he says. "He's so famous, man, he just can't go no wrong and I'm glad to be a friend of someone like that. Jeff Beck, that's another special guy to me, what a guitar player! They have done so much for the blues, man, the way they loan a helping hand to peoples. They're there whenever we need them, myself or John Lee Hooker or BB King or who else — and they don't *have* to do that."

True enough: where are Led Zeppelin when it comes to repaying old debts? Guy's brilliant album makes it impossible to understand how he could be ignored for so long, but he was — and his gratitude now comes from sheer relief.

"You know I dedicated my life to this music and it scares me when you go by 12 years and don't put anything out. For years you didn't see the great Muddy Waters and the Howlin' Wolf and people like that on television and MTV and so the young people didn't have the slightest idea. It's like if you got a good restaurant, if no one tells you about it, you'll never know . . ."

George 'Buddy' Guy has eight children — three boys and three girls by his first wife, and kids of 11 and 13 by his current wife Jennifer, with whom he lives in the Chicago suburb of Flossmoor. When, on the LP title track, he sings "I stopped by my daughter's house, I just wanted to use the phone/My little grandbabby came to the door and said Granddaddy you know there's no one at home", it's a real incident. In the mid-'80s things got so bad for Buddy, even his own son didn't know who he was.

"Several years ago the middle boy asked me for a guitar and went into how he's crazy about Prince. He came back in a short time and said, 'I'm playing some of those Prince licks, Daddy, who shall I listen to now?' and I said, 'If you like that kinda music I think I better collect you some Hendrix stuff'. He said: 'Who's that?'

"When he had heard Hendrix he said, 'Wow Dad, that Hendrix is bad. But you know what he said? He said he said he learned some licks from you. I didn't know you could do that!'

"I said, 'You never asked'."

But as Guy says, if he never released a record or appeared on TV while his son was a teenager, why *should* he know? It wasn't until Gregory was old enough to see his dad in a club that he finally got the message. "When he was learning, he used to say, 'Bring me a big Marshall amplifier and I'll jump on you out there'. So when he turned 21 about a year ago, he steps in the club and saw me playing at last — and when I finished, he said: 'I don't think I'm ready for you yet, Daddy'."

In some ways, Guy admits, his previous obscurity was his own fault. He and his old sparring partner Junior Wells developed a terrible reputation for selling their fans short. You only have to mention Junior's name and he immediately begins apologising.

"What happened, you know, not being into the market where you draw hundreds of people, Junior and I still played the small clubs. I love the small places, man, they have kept me going pretty good over the last 15 years. But if the guy who owned the club had to turn his house over (putting on two shows in an evening) just to make ends meet, that didn't give us enough time to perform. They'd come in and say, '45 minutes for Junior and Buddy'.

"I sat and talk to Junior, I said, 'We just killing ourselves because we not playing enough'. So we broke up and it's working out fine — he's happy (Wells' current Alligator album, *Harpoon Attack!* with James Cotton, Carey Bell and Billy Branch, is a treat) and I'm happy too. But Junior and I are still the best of friends, and when we get the chance to play together again, we do."

The other thing Guy did wrong — in common with so many blues players — was to let himself be rushed in the studio. "The last album I did (*Stone Crazy!*), we didn't get serious enough. We was on tour in France, we just passed through that day and had to be at the next gig tomorrow, so I didn't have time to mess with it. A good album calls for a lot of work and time and I never did get the chance to say, 'I don't like that, I can do a better job'. It was always just do it and get the hell out of here."

Even worse, Guy claims that when he did record regularly, he rarely got to do things the way he wanted. "Every time I would go in the studio, someone was teaching me how to play. That's why I got to thank Silvertone Records: they came in and say, 'I want to bring you to London and let you play a Buddy Guy album'. I say, 'Oh, I finally got my chance!'

"A couple more labels came to me about the same time Silvertone did, but I just liked it when they told me what they was going to let me do, which was be Buddy Guy. And that's just what I wanted to be all my life. It's about time."

Buddy Guy is touring Britain this month. The dates are: London Town & Country Club November 17, 18 and probably 19; Birmingham Town Hall 21; Manchester Free Trade Hall 22; Edinburgh Playhouse 23; Glasgow Royal Concert Hall 24. The tour is sponsored by Ferguson Jazz and Blues.

NOW'S presents . . . THE TIME

THE GERSHWINS RESTORED

by Mike Fish

J U S T A S the classical lobby has been hung up on authentic readings on period instruments, maybe it's now the turn of the musical to receive the same sort of restorative treatment. John McGinn's work on the likes of *Show Boat* has been followed by an exceptional initiative to put some of the classic Gershwin musicals back into recorded circulation via painstaking research and recreation. We've already had *Girl Crazy*, released complete for the first time; now the same team of restorer Tommy Krasker and musical director John Mauceri have put together a complete *Strike Up The Band*.

Krasker, a chirpy, smiling New Yorker, regards the show as a particular masterpiece of its day. "Some of their other shows have some wonderful tunes with a rickety libretto, but this was the first Gershwin show which has real merit as a theatre piece. Yet its original run was a failure. It opened in 1927 out of town and had its major run for two weeks in Philadelphia. Then it closed. It was the kind of show which critics adored and audiences wouldn't come to. An anti-war satire that made fun of profiteering, politicians, even the public to some extent. But audiences weren't interested in being criticised. It was a very self-satisfied country at that time."

Krasker's work was sponsored by Lenore Gershwin, Ira's widow, whose beneficence brought about the revival of *Girl Crazy* and proved inspirational in reassessing the Gershwin's legacy. Sadly, Mrs Gershwin died in August, but her introductory note to the record offers a touching memento of her endeavours. Krasker chose to do a 'compilation' restoration, which includes some of the material from the revised 1930 edition of the show amongst the original songs: "They softened the satire a great deal, brought in two burlesque comics, gave it much more vaudeville schtick — about 80 per cent of the material was different. But we're more used to serious subjects in musical theatre now, and I think the original score has its own appeal."

Times change — singers sing differently, musicians inflect in another way. How authentic can such a revival be without it sounding archaic?

"We try to find a balance. I'm always aware, when I'm restoring shows, that they're written to be performed. The Gershwins were the first to tailor songs to a performer. We don't allow any kind of back-phrasing, or any kind of crooning. But ways of singing have changed. If you tried to get people to sing the way Gertrude Lawrence would sing, it would sound uncomfortable. We have musicians who can play in a period style but who can also bring their own life to it.

Strike Up The Band was the first show to feature belters. The style that followed, with Ethel Merman and Ginger



George and Ira

Rogers, was belting. It's hard to find stylists who can handle the older way, because people aren't trained to sing in the light, lyric way of the early 20s."

Krasker's restoration took an awesome amount of dedication. He wrapped up *Girl Crazy* in a year, but because so few of the orchestrations for *Strike Up The Band* survived — a commonplace problem with all of the pre-war masterpieces of the American musical — he had to do a lot more rebuilding. This one took four years. Jazz followers will recognise the style of Dick Hyman's Overture, and most of the other orchestrations seem to muster a contemporary zest with the right, just-slightly-faded sound of an original tumbler.

What does the record sound like? As with *Girl Crazy*, there's a somewhat brassy feel to the mix, with the singers a little recessed. But it's hard to disagree with Krasker's view of the score. There is a lot of marvellous Gershwin here — not just the famous title song, "The Man I Love" and "Soon", but "Typical Self-Made American", "17 And 21" and a number of other tunes that match the sly sting of George S Kaufman's book. Mauceri has the measure of it all, and the cast sound, well, authentic.

There is much more Gershwin to be discovered: *Pardon My English*, Ira and Kurt Weill's *Lady In The Dark*, even the originals of *Ob Kay!* and *Lady Be Good* and *Funny Face*. Then we can move on to Rodgers and Hart, Porter and Kern. For a start. But this will do for now.

Both Girl Crazy and Strike Up The Band are available on Elektra Nonesuch.



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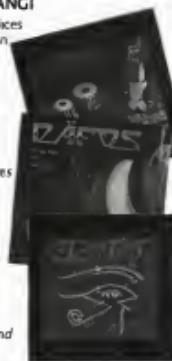
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MILES DAVIS

25.5.26 – 28.9.91

Richard Cook reflects on
the great trumpeter's passing.

SEVERAL PEOPLE asked me what I felt about his death, and I was surprised at my own reaction: melancholy, but not a great grief. Something about his music holds me back from him, that private, introspective, mournful timbre which asks one to stand and admire but never quite partake. It's not the monumental greatness of Coltrane or the slashing, hot virtuosity of Parker, two comparable idols in the jazz lineage, and two other figures who seem to roam free of mortal resonance. But it's the same result. With his long, long career and perhaps too-big discography, Miles Davis is a complex kind of hero.

Since he was rigorous about evading journalistic clichés in his lifetime – all the "don't call me a legend" stuff – it doesn't seem appropriate to pay the usual kind of genius homage which has already appeared in other obituaries. Better, maybe, to try and perceive a clearer picture of the virtues and demerits of Davis's work. It's difficult to distinguish truth from the mystique which he was only too happy to cultivate, even as some saw him as a constant victim of audience and critical harassment.

The mythology extends in every possible direction. Davis was constantly changing – "it's like a curse" – yet, like Duke Ellington or Coleman Hawkins, he remained immediately identifiable, fundamentally unchanged even as his accents and surroundings differed. He cracked trumpet notes in his final years a little more frequently, yet it was a gambit that he was doing in the '50s, a tic which may have been exploited with as much cunning as 'honesty'. As strikingly as he evolved his music, the emotional cast of his playing remained true to the core which he developed in his early '50s Prestige sessions. Though few of his records were note acknowledgements of contractual obligations, there's a mysterious detachment about many of them: as if he preferred to let Teo Macero or Marcus Miller or whoever direct everything but that inimitable private Prince-Of-Darkness musing. If he disliked repetition in his work, there's often scant evidence of 'newness' within a single frame. The period between the end of The Great Quintet and the arrival of Wayne Shorter found his music imploding; the closing years were a gradual decline into shadow after the dissolution of his last great band, with Scofield and Berg, in 1985.

He was a master at scenting brilliant young disciples. Yet he left so many possible collaborations unfulfilled. The most

singular thing about his relationship with Gil Evans was that it produced, in the end, so little work. Countless suggestions of meetings with such as George Russell never came to anything. The most outstanding creation of his last years, Palle Mikkelborg's *Aura*, emerged almost as an oddity. One might applaud his choiciness. Or one could feel frustrated that his having to change didn't take him quite so far as it might. It's hard to imagine Davis seeking out anything so adventurous as Cecil Taylor's sojourn in Berlin.

But why should he? Having invented modal jazz and jazz-rock, for starters, ought to be enough for anyone. And Davis's achievements, on their own terms, really are as formidable as history will insist. Perhaps he never truly equalled the burst of intensity which he sustained in 1955–60: the later steps, with the mid-'60s quintet, the jazz-rock ensembles and further, can arguably be attributed as often to collaborators and a general tenor of the times as to his own innermost urgings. But there's no need for me to tell you that the recorded legacy is a peerless one.

The uncomfortable backdrop to this was his own less than pristine humanism. Davis enjoyed what was, for a jazzman, a long life filled with privilege and reward. Everything he said about friends, enemies, critics, rivals, audiences and whoever was backed up by dues-paying that we were never allowed to forget; the laid-bare autobiography made sure of that. It was more of a tawdry than a poetic document, but he made his point.

Even though he claimed to despise the word, Davis was jazz's premier modern figurehead for 35 years. In the recesses of that vast recorded legacy lies the most complete and intense examination of a jazz musician. It's an indispensable portrait. The legacy will endure.

Miles Davis died in hospital in Santa Monica, California on 28 September at 10.40 AM. Cause of death was listed as pneumonia, respiratory failure and a stroke. A comprehensive survey of Davis's career on record was published in issues 80, 81 and 82/3 of *The Wire*. His final studio album had completed some of the backing tracks but his own solo parts had not been recorded at the time of his death. The illustration at right is from *The Art Of Miles Davis*, just published by Simon and Schuster at \$25.



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Each month we test a musician with a series of records which they're asked to comment on and "mark out of five" – with no prior knowledge of what it is they're hearing!



Bill Bruford. Photo by N.A. Anderson

BILL BRUFORD has kept his ears open. His reunion tour with Yes completed – he was a founder member of the group back in 1968, when only 20 – his energies are once again concentrated on Earthworks, the band he formed with Django Bates and Iain Ballamy, which has just released an excellent third album for Editions EG, *All Hands Brake Late*. Having long since established himself as one of the most virtuosic and astute of rock drummers, with King Crimson, National Health and others, he is clearly enjoying himself in the witty and open-ended music of Earthworks, where he plays chordal as well as kit drums.

Bill took on the Invisible Jukebox with huge enthusiasm, frequently offering vocal encouragement to his colleagues on record.

ART BLAKEY

"Dr Jekyll" from *Live At Kimball's* (Concord). With Terence Blanchard (t), Donald Harrison (as), Jean Toussaint (ts), Mulgrew Miller (p), Lonnie Plaxico (b).

Blakey. Although it sounds like he's playing someone else's kit, it's very happening. I didn't know or could get this violent! It's a Jackie McLean theme, is it? (later) Blakey sounds like he's tiring now, but it's great stuff. Tons of energy. I listened to a lot of Blakey when I was younger. The first thing you notice is that roll into a cymbal, it was like an *eww*. Just the sound of it. I could never figure out if he was playing any paradiddles or anything. Four out of five, since the Blakey music I like best is with Curtis Fuller, he always sounded great. And it sounds facetious, but it's so nice to see drummers smiling, as if they're really enjoying themselves. The same with Billy Higgins.

TONY WILLIAMS

"Emergency" from *Emergency!* (Polydor). Personnel as guessed.

Phew! It's all nicely distorted. Tony on drums, Larry Young and John McLaughlin. Lifetime. No bass on it, that's Larry's left hand. You can imagine what happened — they started wailing, all the meters go to red, and the producer's too terrified to stop it. This is Tony saying, I can play rock.

He's kind of like a supra-human being. On a technical level, he's almost beyond belief. His control at high volume and high velocity, to be able to control a drum set like that is supernatural, like cornering in a very fast car when it's going flat out. Drums have only been around for 70 or 80 years, and up to this point, nobody had any idea that you could do that with them. What do you do after Tony and Jack DeJohnette?

In a way, you try not to let him be an influence. You can't hope to emulate someone like Tony, so you move in another way. It's the magic of stamping your personality on a trashy little drummer which anybody can buy. That's what inspired me, when I started listening to jazz at 12 or 13. It seemed so much more fun than The Beatles. Tony's a little bit in a land on his own, but five for him.

STEVE GADD

"Squids" from *The Brecker Brothers* (Novus 70). With Randy Brecker (t), Michael Brecker (ts), others.

I don't like it much. Got to be quite old, mid-70s. Is it a Dreams album? Billy Cobham? It doesn't sound much like Billy. Is that Brecker on tenor? You'll have to tell me. It's Steve Gadd with *The Brecker Brothers*.

I have to give Steve Gadd credit, because a lot's happened since then, and there's some quite adventurous drumming in this for the period. But this grates on me, whereas the Lifetime thing didn't at all. The tune's horrible. Gadd's a great stylist but, if I'm going to hear this kind of thing from that period, I'd rather hear *Fresh* by Sly Stone. Two for that.

BILLY COBHAM

"Antares" from *Flight Time Live* (Inak).

With Barry Finnerty (g), Don Grolnick (ky), Tim Landers (b).

(Straight away) Oh, that's Billy. Has to be. Oh! Did you hear that stuff? Unbelievable drumming. Basically he's ambidextrous, but his left hand is stronger than his right, which makes a big difference to the way he sounds. I don't know who the other players are. Fairly average — you can find guys in Holiday Inn bands who'll do this for you. What's happening here is the drumming. It's all about Billy. And now they go into the last chorus on two bass-drum pedals — a cliché, but Billy Cobham invented it. The whole cliché of jazz-rock fusion is like this.

Drums have reached an incredible pitch, and nobody knows what to do now. Being a drummer-leader myself, I'm very conscious of this problem, which is that all eyes go to the drummer and expect him to do something. With Billy in this context, it's not very satisfying. Maybe he should join a huge rock group or play with the Karnatak College of Percussion. He needs something fresh, because he can just pour it out, so easily. When I went to Robert Fripp, he said, the whole thing is to change your style. Like — you're not doing that any more, Bill. Refreshing. Four out of five, since it's not a whole thing for Billy.

RONALD SHANNON JACKSON

"Snake Alley" from *Decode Yourself* (Antilles). With Akbar Ali (vn), Robin Eubanks (tb), Vernon Reid (g), Melvin Gibbs (b) (Jackson plays electronic Simmons drums).

We're dealing with machines here! I like it, though. Is it Mike Gibbs? I like the top line a lot. A violin in it, and an oriental feel to the melody, sort of "Together We Will Rebuild Kampuchea" or something. Denardo Coleman, maybe. The idea of a heavy machine-funk, that's as good as I've heard in that area.

It's Ronald Shannon Jackson and *The Dredging Society*.

I know some of his stuff but I didn't know this. I liked the tune and the instrumentation, but basically I don't buy the concept. I don't use programmes at all myself, because it's just more enjoyable to play live.

Machines are so accurate and it maims it so much. I come from an area where it's very accurate, and God knows I'm trying to get some ambiguity into my playing. But five out of five for that.

JACK DEJOHNETTE

"PM's AM" from *Parallel Realities* (MCA). With Gary Thomas (ts), Greg Osby (as), Mick Goodrick (g), Lonnie Plaxico (b).

This must be a drummer's band, because the drums are way too loud! Is it Jack with one of his bands? One of his tunes? I'm not too impressed. The horrible sequencer on this track is *far* too much, filling up all the space. That's got to go. Not the happiest Jack I've heard. Another monster player, but he's having an off day there. I've never seen this band. Three out of five, but I love him. An off day, but I won't say a word against Jack.

MARK NAUSEEF

"The Captain And I" from *Let's Be Generous* (CMP). With Joachim Kuhn (ky), Miroslav Tadic (g), Tony Newton (b).

Great drumming. This is where you'd hope Jimi Hendrix's Experience would have got to. Sounds like Henry Kaiser or Bill Frisell or Fred Frith or one of those guys, although I don't think they'd get quite as heavy metal as this. It's got a tune and it's in time, too. A lot of single notes in the drums, and a lot of light and space.

It's Joachim Kuhn's electric band, with Mark Nauseef.

Ah, is this a CMP record? We did our record there with Walter Quintos engineering. Well, I thought this was really good. Much better than Joachim Kuhn's usual piano stuff. He should give up his day job and do this! Mark Nauseef is a real dark horse. He's sort of a house drummer at CMP. Very good player, very brave. Walter may have fed some tom makes through a ring modulator or something, but I think there were some electric drums in the middle too. I have to say that it gets my blood going to hear Mark Nauseef rather than some of the older guys now. Five out of five.

out there and back

THE ERICL of Dolphy fell silent – as oracles eventually must – on June 29th 1964. He died of a sugary confusion in the blood in the city that once represented all the contradictions and divisions of the age. Berlin had drawn him back for a last time. They were still building and refining the Wall when Dolphy played the Funkturm Exhibition Hall at the end of August 1961. Dolphy was then going single through Europe, playing with well-intentioned but ultimately inadequate local pick-up bands. As if to underline his by then almost uncanny technical superiority and his profound artistic loneliness, he included in each performance an unaccompanied reading of "God Bless The Child", carved out of space on bass clarinet; no one previously had made that brutally unfathomable horn sing, or sing at a lark's height, far beyond its orthodox register.

"God Bless The Child" is one of the essential modern jazz performances and Berlin seems a perfectly appropriate setting for it. Like the Wall, it merely accentuates the history it purports to bisect. Though no conservative, Eric Dolphy was inescapably a traditionalist; if his music lacks the sudden alienating wallop of an equivalent dose of Ornette Coleman or Cecil Taylor, or the huge emotional range of John Coltrane, its strangeness is even less quantifiable for being conveyed in a (relatively) familiar harmonic tongue. "God Bless The Child" even echoes the physical appearance of the Wall – pre-stressed slabs of sound and melody fantastically graffitized – and of a city controlled by one or another grand dialectic but decked out, both sides, in rococo finery.

It's significant, and not a little sad, that when Dolphy did find a sympathetic and amenable partner, in the shape of trumpeter Booker Little, not only was the relationship fated (Little died horribly of uremia, again in 1961) but the most memorable product of their brief collaboration turns out to be another Dolphy solo. *Far Cry* was the only studio album he was to make with Little at hand (*Owl Front*, recorded in March 1961, was Little's album through and through, and a rare instance of Dolphy *not* dominating his environment) yet its most extraordinary track is the alto saxophone solo "Tenderly", a piece that anticipates virtually every technical and structural device on Anthony Braxton's much over-praised *For Alts*.

With Little, Dolphy had explored the ruins of bebop. The trumpeter replaced the familiar fractured lines with something longer and more lyrical. Dolphy was as resistant to Charlie Parker's vertical take-offs from the top of the chord as he was to Coltrane's harmonic fantasias. Indeed, his relationship with Coltrane has been much over-emphasised, for largely sentimental reasons; they were aesthetically quite at odds, and Dolphy's inclusion in the great Quartet at the cold end of 1961 caused more than a little resentment. Apart from Little, the only musician who provided Dolphy with the kind of environment his music demanded was his fellow-Anglican Charles Mingus, to whom he returned for a final triumphant stint in the year of his death.

Brian Morton reassesses the celebrated but misunderstood career and contribution of the great Eric Dolphy.

Discography

Outward Bound Original Jazz Classics OJC 022;
Out There Original Jazz Classics OJC 023;
Far Cry Original Jazz Classics OJC 400;
Berlin Concerts Enja 3007 9 807605/ & 882960,
The Copenhagen Concert Prestige P 240277;
In Europe 1–3 Original Jazz Classics OJC 413/4/6;
Stockholm Sessions Enja 3055;
*Out To Lamb*¹ Blue Note 746524;
Canal Dolphy Candid 9033;
Vintage Dolphy Enja 5045.



DOLPHY'S WEST Coast upbringing afforded him a brief contact with the apostolic roots of bop. In 1949, he recorded a dozen sides with the red-hot Roy Porter band. It was ten years before he was asked to record again, but Dolphy already sounds like an adopted child who breaks out in mysterious utterances in his native tongue. In 1958, he joined the Chico Hamilton Quintet, a post previously held by Buddy Collette and Paul Horn, and for which his growing facility on flute and bass clarinet in addition to alto saxophone fitted him perfectly. Dolphy's quietly meditative presence on *Jazz On A Summer's Day* is one of the most memorable moments in the film. After five albums with Hamilton, Dolphy moved on, cutting his own first album on All Fools' Day 1960. *Outward Bound* brought together Freddie Hubbard, Jaki Byard, the bassist Ben Tucker (who may have got Dolphy the date) and the brilliant Roy Haynes on drums. After 30 years, it still stands up remarkably well; "God Bless The Child" apart, standards were never really the measure of Dolphy's genius, but on "On Green Dolphin Street" here, he and Hubbard prove themselves utterly at ease with pre- and post-bop approaches to the theme.

Eric Dolphy



Photo by Val Wintner

Nineteen-sixty was an almost bizarrely busy year for Dolphy, yielding an eventual 16 albums, sometimes in contexts that scarcely flattered his talents. In addition to his own second record as leader, *Out There*, he played with Oliver Nelson, Ken McIntyre, John Lewis, Abbey Lincoln, Mingus, a truly forgettable Latin jazz quintet which even completists could safely ignore, and – dipping into the Third Stream – John Lewis. In December, he played the bass clarinet part in Ornette Coleman's *Free Jazz* double quartet, an uneasy, colourist's role in a notably inchoate performance. Later the very same day, out in Hackensack, New Jersey, he recorded *Fare Cry* with Little, and it's hard not to speculate what was going through his mind on the car ride out of New York City with the final twinned bars of Coleman's piece still ringing in his ears.

In 1954, out on the Coast, Dolphy had lent – or rather given – a badly strung-out Coltrane enough cash to get back to Philadelphia. Favours in music are usually returned in gigs. Dolphy arranged much of the music for *Afrika/Brass* and played on Coltrane's still underrated *Ode*, where he originally appeared disguised as "George Lane". He recorded with Ron

Carter, Mal Waldron and, most productively, George Russell, with whom he traded valuable insights on the division and misprision of the harmonic sequence. And, of course, he toured Europe with Coltrane. By the end of 1961, Coltrane's statement of the theme to "Naïma" had become almost perfunctory, a peck on the cheek rather than the billowing embrace of *Giant Steps* and afterward. In Sweden, Dolphy seizes on the theme and turns it into something quite impersonal, lapidary, unemotional in the sense that it expresses nothing other than itself.

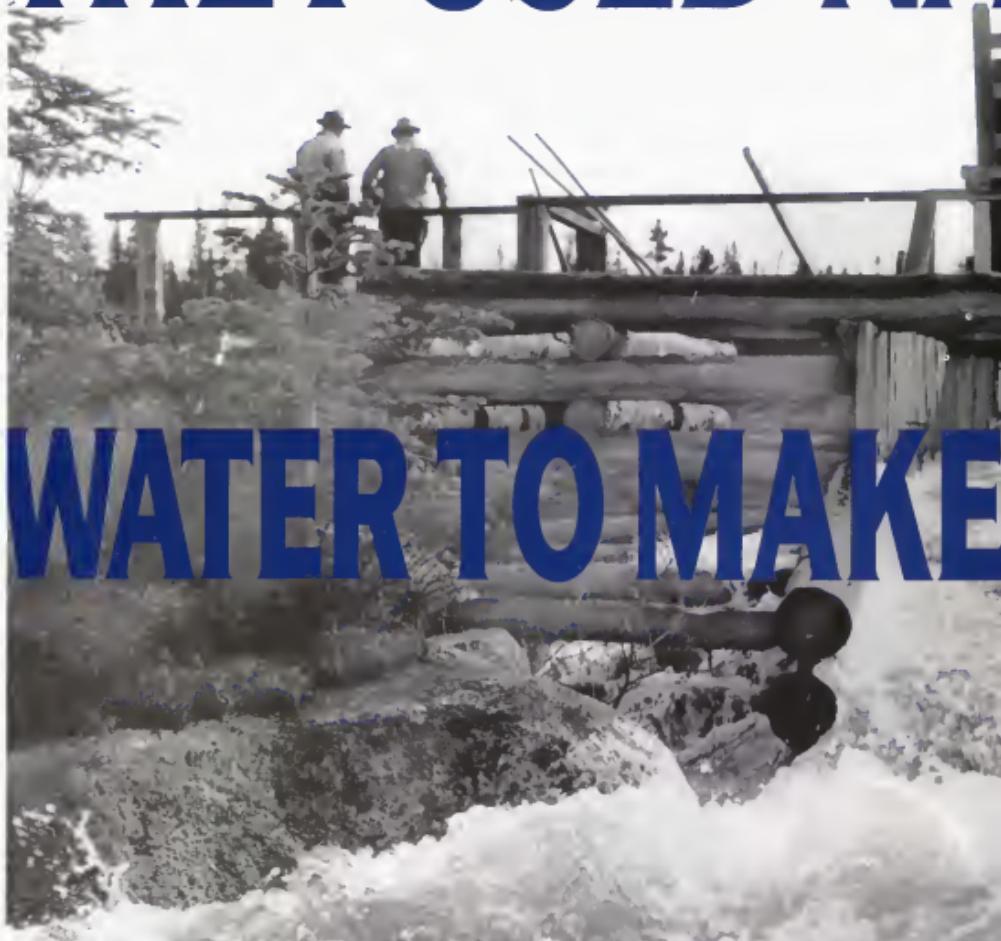
TRY TO visualise the music of the great modernists for a moment. Bird's supposed flights and swoops are now so ingrained an image nothing will blur or ground them. Coltrane's spiralling ascensions. Taylor's, yes, dancing leaps in space. Coleman's unruly train racketing and howling over the spaces of the South West. And Dolphy? It's hard to think of him as anything with that much external movement. A bubble chamber or Leyden jar, maybe, or perhaps just a jar. With an imp inside, and no urgency to set it free. Dolphy has been undervalued most because he chose to work in the inner space of jazz harmony, concentrating on its external conformation as a matter of boundaries to be confronted and followed along their symmetries and asymmetries, not just promiscuously breached. Dolphy's finest music gives away almost nothing of himself. The "emotion" which Little claimed was freed by the patient distortion of the diatonic scale wasn't emotion in the conventional sense at all, but a kind of intellectual energy with a vastly greater kinetic charge.

Dolphy's music recedes but never quite disintegrates as we try to take possession of it. *Out To Lunch*, his very finest achievement, is a near-perfect collective enterprise, as distinguished by Tony Williams's broken-field drumming, Richard Davis's symphonic bass and Bobby Hutcherson's tightly percussive vibes, as by Hubbard's and Dolphy's urgent soloing. In 1987 *Wire* readers voted *Out To Lunch* their top jazz album of all time. Among musicians – including those hardened modernists who christened him the Ericle of Dolphy – his reputation is paramount. Yet there is a strong sense that Dolphy can safely be left on the shelf, like a household god or a piece of fractured pottery that combines disturbing incompleteness with every promise of ultimate aesthetic beauty. Dolphy is more than a torso from the wreckage of bop. His message is intermittent and gnomic, but like it or not, fundamental; when, on his (so-called) *Last Date*, at the end of "Miss Ann", he spoke of music's evanescence – "you can't recapture it again" – he wasn't making an abstract metaphysical point, but a sternly practical one. That he lived so short a time was a tragedy. That he has been listened to so casually is a worse one. *

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3. Which European-born string bass player played in the first Weather Report line-up?

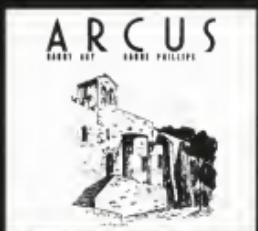
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TEN BRACING YEARS IN THE CLEAN SEA AIR WOULD BE CHARACTER BUILDING FOR ANYONE.



This is an exemplary tale without a cold shower in sight. It concerns the rounding effect of Islay's invigorating marine air on a wayward spirit. Laphroaig, Malted, mashed and distilled within feet of the Atlantic, our young subject is left to commune slowly with the briny atmosphere. Ten years on, redolent of the ocean and with an unmistakable rich, peaty taste, Laphroaig is ready for the world, a true leader. SINGLE ISLAY MALT AS UNIQUE AS THE ISLAND ITSELF.



NOT *Mozart*

Richard Cook views a new TV series that takes an irreverent look at the great composer through the eyes *and manuscript papers* of five modern counterparts.



THE MOZART bicentenary has brought about countless records, tributes, and other manifestations of music's heritage industry. But surely none have approached the occasion with as much spirit, wit and sacrificial intensity as *Not Mozart*, the truly extraordinary series of five programmes which the BBC will be screening this month.

Devised and co-produced by Annette Morreau, whose name will be familiar to all who've followed the presentation of contemporary music in this country over many years, the series offered five composers the opportunity to create a personal turn out of Mozart's legacy, each in the context of a 30-minute film. Hence there is Louis Andriessen's music adoring a bizarre tableau created by Peter Greenaway, *M Is For Man, Mishi, Mozart*; Judith Weir creates a tiny chamber opera out of Mozart's *Sopra*; H K Gruber races through a crazy piece of Peckinpah-meets-Keystone, *Bring Me The Head Of Amadeus*; and the beloved Misha Mengelberg fashions a characteristically tragic-comic score for a bizarre parable by Anthony Garner, *WAM! Limited*.

Possibly the finest of the quintet, though, is Jeremy

Newson's *Letters, Riddle And Writs*. Michael Nyman's score offerts a moving colloquy to Mozart's music, and the film — in which Ute Lemper appears as W.A.M., and Haydn and Beethoven conduct their own inquiry into their colleague's life — is a small, perfect gem.

Conceived and realised away from the immediate glare of the Mozart industry — many of the above names will be heavyweights to *The Wire* readers, but perhaps to not so many more — it's both a refreshing antidote and a useful immersion for everyone bored by Mozart hype but still interested in Mozart. Since much of the material spins off from only the slightest of Mozarrian corollaries, there's no authenticity for it to get bogged down in. Morreau's idea of letting the composers run as wild as they dared pays off in stand-alone music, and with Greenaway and the other directors comparably challenged, the final results are as remarkable as one might have hoped. Gruber sets the tone at the very start of his episode, he goes to bed, vowing to sleep until wretched 1991 is over! *

Not Mozart begins its weekly screening on BBC2 on 3 November.



The history of Modern Music has lasted maybe a little over 75 years: over-invoked but under-examined, Punk Rock, as measured from the November 1976 release of "Anarchy In The UK", occupies only a fifth of that history chronologically, and – as yet – almost none of it analytically.

Yet its artistic and social effects are today so widely scattered and also so ubiquitously pervasive that seeing them clearly may actually be impossible, which surely suggests it's time some attempt was made to get perspective on these effects, especially – for us – as they touch so-called "serious" music. Over the next 20-odd pages, we intend to do just that.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS...

Punk Rock
15 years on



ILLUSTRATION: JON SAVAGE

Much (though not all) of the music *The Wire* exists to cover, from Courtney Pine to Steve Martland, could only have survived in pockets of possibility ripped open when the original Punk community shattered so violently. Much of the rest of it exists in precise consequence of earlier utopian anti-music music ruptures (dada, 12-tone, bruitism, bebop, Darmstadt, Cage, free jazz, underground rock), a tradition of resistance that is at the very least echoed by Punk (and which it – arguably – consummates).

In so short a space, there's no way to begin to cover such topics in depth. Jon Savage's Pistols-biog *England's Dreaming* (reviewed here) and Greil Marcus' *Liptick Traces* (a 500-page disquisition on the possible meanings of "Holidays In The Sun") are both exhaustively researched, lectern-bible weight tomes. In the end, even they ask far more questions than they answer.



Mick Rock

shadow behind the heart

Mark Sinker reviews the book that's stirring up old battles and starting new ones.

England's Dreaming: Sex Pistols & Punk Rock

BY JON SAVAGE

Faber £17.50 hb

FIFTEEN YEARS ago, and for a little over a year after that – November 76 to February 78 – a small band of people embarked, hardly knowing what they were committing themselves to, on a stupid, sordid, tragic, utopian adventure. Just for a giggle, they said, let's change the world.

Jon Savage was an insider-observer during those times. This book, representing some ten years of work, pieced together from more than a hundred interviews and a vast archive of ephemera, is the story – a story – of what actually happened, from Malcolm McLaren's early plans to final outcome, of who was there and what they did. It's a story of 430 King's Road as a UK version of Warhol's Factory, with its gathering of bright misfits and ill-starred undergrounders, a story of the volatile, explosive relationship between McLaren and Johnny Rotten, from first fascination to later, bitterly overstated mutual hatred, through the early shows and the implausibly fast detonation of wider reaction, to "Anarchy", to Bill Grundy, to "God Save The Queen" and the Jubilee and national paean status, to the final, dreadful US tour, dissolution, Sid's doom, and a nightmare of legal entanglement.

It's also a story of why it happened when and where it did, and – more importantly, because so often taken so for granted – why against all odds it had such a vast, far-reaching effect: the beginnings of a story of what came after, which we continue to live through. A story of how four spitting, cussing, anti-social London teenagers could become moral-political icons to dissident youth (and others) from Washington to Moscow and beyond, of how lurching high-profile hedonism inspired a worldwide teen-wave of furtive self-interrogation (where any fun was probably a trap), of how the sounds they made and the shapes they threw left, in his words, "trails that have continued to hang in the sky ever since, longer than anyone could have possibly imagined or wished."

It's a five-act tragedy, a story of death, drugs and hatred, of puritan desperation and apocalyptic confidence, of triumph in failure and failure in triumph. A story that starts bizarrely, with an arty anarchist and his pervy Kings Road troubleshooter, and an urchin lout from Finsbury Park who unleashes a demon in himself and his generation. A story that gets stronger and more terrible: as Simon John Ritchie, a smart, sensitive, rigorously idealistic, unfocussed child-turned-fan-turned-star – named Sid after a hamster, and Vicious because he wasn't (then) – fashions himself, out of confused rage and massive nebulous disappointment, into a self-destructive mass-marketed cartoon.

It's a story so unlikely it couldn't possibly happen, except that it did, an elementally compelling moral fable which accelerates towards a horrible end, a fable about the duty to transform yourself and the world, and how it is when you fail (and how it is when you succeed). It's a huge story crushed into a tiny story, of the simultaneous acting out, deliberately and

unconsciously, of all the best and worst possibilities in Popular Culture, its fascisms and its freedoms, its casually primitive simplicities and its unguarded and strangely subtle innovations.

Always to date the story's telling has been partial and self-serving, as 80s careerists repositioned themselves away from the lows, nuzzling up to the highs. Maybe this version is also: I wasn't there (if I had been, my judgement would also be suspect). But this is the first time all the explosive contradictions contained in all the voices and all the visions have been brought back together, the first time its original, ownerless, uncontrolled collectivity has been respected.

The story of Pop is a story of demands, underclass demands made on and through a medium developed by black Americans, and borrowed in the 60s, dimly understood, for an inchoate but potent Children's Crusade: for the white world, Punk was Pop's getting of wisdom, its blasting of illusions – drugs are dumb, sex is boring, your future dream is a shopping scheme, NO FUTURE NO FUTURE NO FUTURE. Which is also a recognition that demands should run deeper, towards escape from community prejudice. From class stereotype. From gender trivias. That they *didn't* run deeper made the rage all the greater.

The unanswered question – how good were they? – is unanswerable. So's the other one: where would Lydon's intelligence and volcanic anger have surfaced if Punk *hadn't* happened? This is the fact of it: no future musicology will ever quantify for practical educational purposes this untutored anti-musician's terrifying vocal improvisation in "Belsen Was A Gas", on his last night as a Sex Pistol, as he drives the appalling, ugly, mindless, dangerous words towards a howl of absolute disgust, at himself, at his audience, at the world: for having had a Belsen in the first place, and then for letting him to sing about it (or worse, for requiring him to when no one else would).

In his Pistols-study, *Lipstick Traces*, Greil Marcus quotes founder-dadaist and latterly respectable New York psychoanalyst Richard Huelsenbeck, at the end of his long life, looking back across more than half a century: "And so as a doctor I was a success, and as a dadaist (the thing closest to my heart) I was a failure." The point, says Marcus, "is not to ask what he meant; that was his business. The point is to ask what it would mean to live with that kind of phantom in your heart." British Pop Culture – still, for whatever reasons, an imprint for everyone else's – has been trapped in a feverishly endless present for a decade and a half (this week's big thing has always meant, secretly, this week's Sex Pistols), because it doesn't look an equivalent phantom full in the face: because of how it will have to measure itself, because that questioning might have to begin again.

This book is only 550 pages long (excluding an exhaustive and invaluable discography), so obviously, if it's the truth, it's still not the whole truth. But it's big enough, in scope and force, to reignite all the old arguments: about what happened, what didn't and what still could. But also about *why*: which is the real challenge.

MARK SENKER

*

NOSTALGIA

for an age yet to come

credit: unknown

1. "Anti-art was the start" — x-ray spex

DEPENDS WHAT you mean by "serious" music, you see. Depends what you mean by "good", by "value", and what you want words like this to go on and do. Depends on who makes the rules, and why, and why we let them.

All down the century, some gleeful barbarian democrat has been switching the High and the Low. First to matter, for our purposes — when the switch came on-line HARD — is Bebop's mid-War reply to Stravinsky's disdident overtures; yes, said Bird and Dix and the rest, we're real live popular highbrow culture. Serious, plus funky on the floor. Not one, nor the other, but both. A claims culture-mavens were mostly programmed not to hear, with America still an apartheid state.

Pop Art and Pop cruising one another, this was the next stage. They smashed through each other; briefly they turned into each other, one invoking mass reproduction culture (Warhol's multiple *Marilyns*), the other (*Blake's Pepper* cover everywhere) being it. The union fell apart when the big gallery money began to roll in, but for a while — blurring the proprieties, ramming open the possibilities, harassing the mandarins — avant garde dabbles were given trans-Global momentum, brilliantly highlighted in the body of Pop.

Punk — born in Bop's black/white hipster underground, remade in the Factory's dissident dream-academy — was more than simply a neat time to have lived through, long ago and far away. More than dressing to disguise: more than transient intensity for bored youth: it was also the final call on the trivial cheat of High Art. At the last time of asking, Pop Art in extremis, no longer simply celebrating MassCult emptiness, but *missing* on it, everywhere.

So, does this make it the antithesis of everything *The Wire* stands for? The enemy of quality, craft, reflective intelligence and the hunt for truer, deeper currents in sonic expression?

Hopey Glass argues that Punk – as a PopCult outburst in and beyond the tradition of all vanguard art this century – still presents challenges to other serious musics, about the ways there are of changing things, and the reasons for it.

Or is it the secret heart of what we've always been about? The angry challenge to mere comfort, the informed refusal to simply make do, to just take what we're given without keeping on with the questions questions questions.

Punk made all the strands of Pop it touched justify the attention paid them. It thrived on conceptual trouble-making, on improper connections: a decency-baiting energy in symbiosis with tabloid impatience. Brutally quick to yell *Next!*, it demanded — in back of its colossal need to speak, and can't-play-won't-play primitivism of means — a speed of self-examination and swift departure that sharpened up critical instincts to a level of withering intolerance. Much music — till then confidently arrogant in its significance, its "seriousness" — stumbled, faltered, retreated or recanted.

2. "No guarantee the stimulus will be perceived the same way" — The Adverts

SOME PEOPLE grew up before it. Some people grew up through it. Some people grew up after. Like any other event, to be sure, except that more than any other mere "event" (any event in Pop — which in our all-mediated world means any event anywhere), these three groups of people find it almost impossible to communicate.

The first lot want to pretend nothing much happened: that Pop was nothing serious anyway, just fun — that shattered 60s confidence was simply youthfully misplaced, and now we're all grownups together, and "seriousness" is back where it belongs, in old High Art and books and galleries. The third lot take all the blurs as read — everything's Pop to them, and can they please get on with their times now, please.

And the second lot are still doggedly taking their lives apart and putting them back together, trying to make sense of a teenage cataclysm that left all faith in anything no more than provisional. Which is very weird, and very widespread — and never discussed in public. Mad Max crusties, UltraGoth Queen-of-the-Night street fashions, you walk past them daily and you don't even turn your head. At a look which yields *we-are-the-undead* or *apocalypse-just-happened: didn't you notice?* Britain's refusenik underground, as disenfranchised as any Eastern European youth or black American urbanite. Archæos Nation, clearly there but somehow invisible. The UK's last significant export.

3. "Nostalgia for an age yet to come" — Buzzcocks/Penetration
E A S Y T O sneer at that dogged survivor's look you catch in outsider eyes these days (as if we aren't all undergrounders now). Easy to recall that first punk look, when everything still seemed possible — look at primordial punk icons Sue Catwoman or Debbi Juvenile; look at pre-Grundy Rotten, the Slits. It's defiant, for-the-moment, gleeful, funny and immediate and scary, a little damaged, a little deranged: "Don't know what we want, but we know how to get it . . .".

There was another look. It didn't surface till later, but only a very little later: "a sad, shadowed, older-than-God gaze into infinite distance," someone called it recently. See it in Gaye Advert's eyes, in Penetration's Pauline Murray's, in Siouxsie's (the girls in particular knew what they had to lose — before the gap closed, no vanguard art movement had so re-aligned sexual politics). In Rotten's, as he realises the Kingdom isn't coming: a hooded, unfoiled desolation, which he hides, fast, when he knows he's being watched.

And in Sid's eyes also, an emperious, a broken-backed idealism betrayed: nostalgia for an age that never came. They knew all too well now that what they'd been trying for — if it could ever be — was only made harder by their failure. That bursting through divisions is not the same as ending them, may in fact only reinforce them. Calling the bluff of every vanguard art movement this century, they'd learn what could be done, by making things available — and discovered what was still left to be done.

Smugness kills — kills art, kills communication. No one with any claim on "seriousness" has a right to subcultural complacency: you may need room to develop, to strengthen

yourself, out in the quiet. But in the end, if what you're after matters, it matters to everyone, and it has to get to everyone. In a magazine devoted to "serious" music, no music is entitled to have its significance taken for granted. A call for a return to basics needn't simply mean a plunge into incompetent noise, except when that's the only way, to lay motivations bare, to wear deep ethics on the sleeve again. That haunted look is the key to unfinished business at hand: because it says it CAN be done. Because every now and then, it has been. *



SUBMERGING — Mick Jones & Paul Simonon of The Clash

Just Saying NO

Caught between the echoes of far-away Punk rhetoric and local self-preservation, a generation of American youth threw themselves into the most unlikely teen-craze of all: absolute abstinence.

PUNKS TRIED to turn society inside out and upside down. They gave the finger to anything that suggested music biz convention — rock stars, guitar solos, love songs, hippie hair . . . and self-indulgent substance abuse.

But in reality, in private, many punks around the world danced to the same old sixties song: feed your head, blot out reality, find courage to rebel in pills, powders, pot, and that musician's old standby, alcohol.

Sid Vicious, the icon of in-your-face rebellion puking at the feet of the mainstream music industry, ended up falling to the same rock'n'roll cliche fate that sapped so many long-haired, bombastic, preening rock stars that punks scoffed at. He O.D.'d. In California, Darby Crash, the permanently inebri-

ated lead singer of the infamous Germs — the first West Coast punk unit — also dropped dead after a needle session just as his band was being hailed by critics as the States' heir apparent to the Sex Pistols' legacy. To other punks, ingesting deadly and addictive substances began as initiation into the scene and quickly became business as usual: Johnny Thunders throughout the 1970s and 1980s spiked perforated veins and rolled up his sleeves to taunt his audience — and the grim reaper — with fresh track marks.

Against this context — charred bones, fried brains, punk

dinosaurs – a second wave of punks instigated insurrection. They called themselves Straight Edge and launched a self-righteous rebellion against the musicians>equals=drugs equation: "I'm a person just like you / But I've got better things to do / Than sit around and fuck my head / Hang out with the living dead / Smart white shit up my nose / Pass out at the shows / I don't even think about speed / That's something I just don't need / I've got the straight edge" (Minor Threat's "Straight Edge" – lyrics Ian MacKaye).

"Straight Edge" was the 45-second, thrashing "positive



Peter M. Cook

punk" anthem released in 1980 by Washington DC's Minor Threat. Over the ensuing decade its influence throughout the United States punk community was phenomenal. Dozens of bands and their fans began calling themselves Straight Edge ("S.E." in punk slang), swearing off illegal drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes.

Minor Threat was a ferociously powerful and convincing force. In 1983 when they released "Out Of Step (With The World)", with MacKaye shouting out "Don't Smoke, Don't Drink, Don't Fuck", S.E. kids throughout the States began pledging themselves to celibacy as well. (This is especially easy when you're too young and inexperienced to get any, anyway.) Minor Threat would later take pains in interviews explaining that "Don't Fuck" questioned a casual drug-'em-and-plug-'em attitude toward sex that it wasn't a call for asexuality. The damage was done. By 1985 "Straight Edge" was in full swing.

The Dead Kennedys and Black Flag, the two most important early 80s punk bands in the U.S., neither of them specifically straight edge, were nonetheless fronted by teetotalers. The Kennedy's leader Jello Biafra (who gave up pot because it was boring) found straight edge favour with his song "Too Drunk To Fuck". Flag's fiercely independent vocalist Henry Rollins,

a close friend of Ian MacKaye, was also straight. "I don't drink, I don't smoke, I don't take no drugs," he told *Flipside* as early as 1981. Flag songs like "Six Pack" and "TV Party" coincided with straight edge themes, but the "freedom of choice" tone left an ambiguity: the songs also became anthems for the party-til-you-puke punk faction.

In the early 1980s Straight Edge was suddenly in step with the conservative political climate that grew up around it. President Ronald Reagan launched his national "Just Say No To Drugs" campaign. Soon every two-bit politician and clergyman was jumping to the podium issuing anti-drug proclamations. Being straight edge, or at least proclaiming to be during this era of near-fascist police scrutiny, was for many punks – especially those with shaved heads or outrageous hair or any other signs of anti-social model – as much a matter of street survival as ideology. However, as might be expected, when straight edge became more mainstream a problem developed. How could bands retain a rebellious anti-authoritarian tone if the message is the same as government leaders they all despise?

By the time George Bush became president in 1988 and escalated his nationwide "War On Drugs", non-straighties (there were more than ever) were so sick and tired of being told what they could and couldn't put into their bodies that they began attacking straight edge bands.

Even committed straight edgers were disgusted by the wave of political and religious groups preaching straight edge messages along with propaganda urging intolerance and blind obedience to authority. Popular straight edge bands backed off. Some publicly reversed their stance, began openly drinking and smoking. Henry Rollins made it a point on Black Flag's *Slip It In* album that despite his no dope, no smoke lifestyle, much of his phenomenal stage energy was fuelled by his addiction to cup after cup of coffee ("Black Coffee"). When Enigma Records plastered a "Walking And Rocking On The Straight Edge" sticker on 7 Seconds' latest album, singer Kevin Seconds was ashamed. "I cringed when I saw it," he told an interviewer from *Maximum Rock N Roll*.

MacKaye broke up Minor Threat and launched a new band, Fugazi. He had to rephrase his straight edge rhetoric if only to survive. "We get so much shit from people who take drugs, we get attacked!", he explained. "We don't tell people what to do. We want people to think for themselves. Controlling things and not letting them control you, that's basically what straight edge is."

As we head into the 1990s, Straight Edge has faded. Many straight edgers were younger than legal drinking age when they entered the scene. Now that they can drink with legal impunity, the rationale for staying straight seems less and less relevant among the pressures of the adult world.

It also seems that punks are realizing that rock and drugs may be bonded like Siamese twins. In the era of Acid House and drug proselytizing bands like Jane's Addiction and Guns N' Roses, Straight Edge rock sounds more an oxymoron than ever.

*

European Echoes

In the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Empire, many old hatreds have come surging back to horrible life – as witness present near-Civil War between Yugoslavian states Serbia and Croatia. Biba Kopf explains Punk's appeal in Eastern Europe before and after this collapse, and tells how the youth of neighbouring Slovenia used it to prophesy, tackle and perhaps even resolve some of these desperate inherited tensions.

FIFTEEN YEARS ago punk ripped wings off burrelles in Kings Road. Years later empires fall in the East. Would it be just a little too fanciful to imagine the cause of the present Eastern European chaos to be rooted in the rippling aftershocks through the world of the Rotter refusenik's apocalyptic cackling?

Whatever, punk sightings in totalitarian regimes were often documented by western correspondents as walking indicators of dissent. To Easterners, punk was quixotic and exotic. It was also an extremely functional means of expressing a profound dissatisfaction with the state of things with a ferocity that disturbed and perplexed authorities. In states where physical culture was enshrined as the official popular culture, punk's self-mutilated look was bound to scar deep for the very fact its revolt seemed to be turned in on itself. And here was, for a change, an influential cult that entirely suited the local economy.

Across Eastern Europe punk quickly developed its own character out of and against a long held and traditional respect for the sung word. The cassette network dear to the punk ethos was already a fixed samizdat form in the east. Tape to tape copying was a far quicker means of spreading the word than the painstaking copying-out and beautiful hand-binding of forbidden books. Furthermore, instantly memorized punk songs were more immediately invigorating, uniting audiences in subversive chants that sometimes cleverly evaded the censors' scissors – that is, on those occasions they went public. In martial law Poland one semi-legal postpunk group used to get the crowds chorusing "I want to bear a cop" while they themselves were singing "I want to be a human being". You couldn't hang a man just for wanting that little.

But punk's impact on Eastern balkanisation is perhaps best witnessed in the non-aligned state of Yugoslavia. Its part-free market economy and the relative freedoms its peoples enjoyed rendered it ripe for punk's rot to set in. Especially in the

westernmost republic of Slovenia, where the underground had a well-developed infra-structure in its capital city Ljubljana's Radio Student. In DJ Igor Vidmar, a free thinker well-versed in Marxist theory, punk found an enthusiastic champion. He could fast talk it past the suspicions of the controlling young communist organisations on the grounds of it being an authentic expression of working class alienation and revolt, even as his own love and understanding of it was at once more instinctive and more complicated. His encouragement of local groups like The Bastards and 92 helped initiate a debate about punk validity which many see as the beginnings of the broader democratic debate. In Laibach and its hydra-headed art organisation Neue Slowenische Kunst, the nascent democratic debate was presented with its profoundest challenge.

"Laibach was a continuation of punk by other means," enthused Igor Vidmar. Founded in 1980 around the death of Tito, their seeming endorsement of a non-aligned totalitarianism seemed to run counter to the very liberalising process that allowed their free expression. Theirs was a dangerous position to adopt in these early, difficult post-Tito years, when a weak and doubting leadership would periodically clampdown on unofficial voices. Unsurprisingly, Laibach's strange, disturbing fusion of rock, noise, nationalist, stalinist and nazi sloganising and art was banned by a state uncertain of itself.

Some Slovenians say the energies of the new democratic movement were released in arguments pro and contra Laibach. A discourse developed around them, and young intellectuals defined their own position in relation to Laibach's right to exist. The rise in influence of the former communist youth magazine Mladina (Youth) coincided with the raised heat of the arguments around the vexed subject of Laibach and what they stood for. They were both a barometer and catalyst of free speech within Slovenia. People who cut their teeth on the Laibach question now hold positions within the government of the new Slovenian republic.

When one of Laibach stated on Slovene TV, on the occasion of the group's tenth anniversary coinciding with the republic's plebiscite on independence from Yugoslavia, "ten years of Laibach is ten years of Slovenian government," he was continuing the provocative rese by other means. In the fabulous Laibach art, and by extension, Neue Slowenische Kunst, Europe was privileged to witness in advance the by turn triumphant and tragic resolution of the nationalistic claims and desires they enshrined and/or parodied and played out.

Laibach: "Laibach itself is not a danger. The real danger exists in the people's old fear of punishment. And out of this fear the seed of evil blooms. Our evil is its projection, meaning we are dangerous to those already dangerous to themselves."

Laibach is the Rotter cackle amplified louder than bombs presently falling in Yugoslavia. In 1976 nobody could ever have dreamed the impact of punk would grow this complex or deadly.. *

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THREE & MEN A BEAT

Wire's reputation – as the foremost quartet of art-formalists to have come out of punk – has shrouded them in enigma. Now a three-piece, with a tell-all biography and a name-change that isn't a name-change to talk to interviewers about, Mark Sinker finds them revitalised, chatty and, er, shrouded in enigma . . .

"**A**T THE time, in the late '70s," says Colin Newman simply, "we weren't a Punk group. There was no way that anyone in the know would have called Wire a Punk group. Now, in the '90s, who gives a fuck whether we were a Punk group or not? We were there – that's what matters. We're probably the only people who care whether we were or whether we weren't."

"I talked," says Graham Lewis a little later, about a different point which turns out to be the same point, "to the president of our Japanese record company. He's in his late 70s, a very distinguished gentleman. And through an interpreter I asked him what the record company had been doing that he liked. And he said they'd just been recording Glenn Miller's music, with as many of the musicians as were in the original group as possible.

"And I asked, How does it sound? And he said, Exactly the same. I said, Well, that's good. He said, Yes, it's very good. It's your perspective. The wonder and the excitement is in the things themselves – because they hold memories, and without memory, we aren't. We don't function."

MEMORY: IN Spring 1979, their third LP *154* – a remarkable release on EMI, then a major label with a major morale problem – had served notice that whatever exactly it was that Punk had unleashed was already travelling far beyond the dreary inanity of "grownup" rock then (let alone now).

The stripped-down density of their first record *Pink Flag* had already burst subtly beyond Punk's own formal restrictions: upended ideas about how economy of sound and structure could be intensified, restructuring towards a delivery which sounded simultaneously one-colour and provocatively rich. The tentative expansions of their ideas – signalled by producer Mike Thorne's use of synthesiser on the follow-up *Charis Missing* – drew hardline punk criticism for its self-indulgence ("a case of the Pink Floyds" ran a typical dismissal).



Behind the attack lay the fact that Wire's first ideas had hit hard: smarter punks wanted Punk to grow, but were hypersensitive about ways it mustn't. Such doubled-over demands would become a fact of Wire-life: they'd innovate, they'd be attacked, they'd innovate again, and be attacked for betraying their previous move.

154 is as extraordinary now as it was then. Then it took all possible ways to reread song-form via 24-track, and ran it into tedium overdrive. Now, while most of the ways they developed to reconfigure the division between form and elaboration, guiding structure and obliterating noise, figure and ground, signal and noise, the serious and the trivial, can be heard even unto the mainstream, the content of the record still compels and confuses. Newman bellows: rhythms thunder: colours

drift: menace gathers, along with other feelings less easy to name. They've fascinated themselves with repetition, at every level.

Outside the studio, their shows grew mind-bogglingly confrontational — conceptual art and dada presented not just to jaded and unshockably tolerant gallery-goers, but as much to their furious original audiences, drunken skinheads still bellowing wretchedly for the old punk "standards" — "12XU", "Lowdown", whatever. Allcomers they happily dismayed, if they could: this was their mission. They parted company with EMI, and shortly after that with each other.

There are only three of them now — Colin, the youngest, the chatty one who's flown in from Belgium for this; Graham, the tricky one, who never takes off his shades, and never misses an opportunity for a disagreement, with me or with his long-time colleagues; and Bruce, the eldest, the quiet one, who arrives late, and says less than half-a-dozen sentences in two hours.



Photo by Dominic Turner

Wir

Since Robert Gorobed, original Wire-drummer, resigned, they've lopped a letter off their name: Wir (pronounced 'Wire'). As they worked themselves ever deeper into the process of electronic sound construction, he felt his own love, real-time drumming, becoming suddenly redundant. For them, as for him, they say, this departure was "liberating".

The 80s had somehow gone wrong for Wire: their quiet comeback in 1985 had – in spite of a series of excellent records – gone dull on them. The strategy, which in order to subvert nostalgia had codified the four-man line-up rigorously (The Beat Combo, they called it), turned increasingly against the spirit of Wire as was. It had become almost marketable, almost predictable. Then Gorobed left, and all the byproducts of the varied solo careers of Newman, Lewis and Gilbert – not just work on soundtracks, computers, chip-age art and composition, but the thought-reversals that went with them – came back into possible play.

"I think if that hadn't happened," says Graham, "there wouldn't have been a Wire with four letters, or even with three letters."

They started again, again.

"We definitely felt," says Colin, "that we wanted to construct a new set of ground rules from what it was. There had been a tendency for it to become what it was from the mid- to late-'80s somewhat by default rather than by decision. We took some fairly tough decisions about what we thought we ought to do – and one of the things we definitely decided was that we ought to have some fun over it. There's three people in this who have very strong conceptual ideas over what we ought to do and what we ought not to do. We're very good at fighting with each other, we've had years of experience.

"But in some ways it's completely irrelevant. We're having this thing because we choose to have it, we're not having it because anyone's telling us we ought to, and we're also not having it because we think we might make a few bob out of it. Wire had become so redundant, certainly in my view, that I was not really interested in being associated with it. It had become kind of cynical really."

And now, at least, they were on their own, give or take Paul Kendall their engineer: Wir were in control, from beginning to end, from pre- to post-production. "Partly the idea of a producer for us was as a referee – and we decided, well, let's stop all that. We don't need an external person to decide between whose idea is the best, let's work it out between us."

"With the number three," says Graham, "you can't abstain on a vote."

The First Letter is their first release as Wir: "Everyone came with rhythms," says Colin. "We decided that was best, being as we didn't have a drummer. In the end I don't know how many were used; they all got adapted. Everything went through the machine, the machine of the working process, some saying it needs this here, that there. You get to a point –

which is I think what I'm most interested in now – where everything gets quite blurred as to where it's supposed to be . . ."

Whoever they sound like now, lost in this machine – themselves, early Pink Floyd as robots, no one at all – their motion through their own private terrain has left routine communication behind long ago, aside from the odd joke in a sung line. Obliquely mechanical, kinetically sleek, a fluidly aggressive pursuance of possible form, of how music's essentials mutate over scrutiny: outside raw impro, it's hard to find anyone who's taken this so far, so consistently. Digital's methods – and its speed – provide them with new levels of objectivity that the raging arguments of old (documented for example in Kevin Eden's biog-dialogue *Everyone Loves A History*) prove are hard won. Now, weighed down with 14 years of sense of self, reflected or remembered, their problem is to retain subjectivity.

"The reason everyone was involved then," says Graham, "was that you felt you had something to say, but you didn't necessarily have the skills. Now, as Colin's saying, you continue all the time to find ways to look at things, how you perceive the world, and how you perceive yourself and what your own life's doing. And I suppose all the time you're trying to preserve the ability to hypnotise yourself, in order that you can sustain a mood, refine or change or break a philosophy, get away from bad habits, get to new passions."

WIRE DISCOGRAPHY

Pink Flag (Harvest/EMI)

Chairs Missing (Harvest/EMI)

IS4 (Harvest/EMI)

Document & Eyewitness (Rough Trade)

The Ideal Copy (Mute)

A Bell Is A Cup Until It's Struck (Mute)

It's Beginning To And Back Again (Mute)

Manscape (Mute)

The Drill (Mute)

The First Letter (Mute)

"YOU CAN have this quite black and white view," says Colin. "70s Wire [thumbs up], 80s Wire [thumbs down], 90s Wire [thumbs up again]. But there is a continuation in the work, even though it's a new thing. We're trying not to throw out the baby with the bathwater, basically. We've always been a bit over-zealous in that respect: we have very often thrown out the baby and then discovered we've had to rescue it from a drain somewhere."

"What we do like," says Graham obscurely, "is the bath." *



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WOBBLE'S PROGRESS

Once just a bystanding thug-in-the-crowd, John Wardle astonished all when he picked up bass for his friend Johnny Rotten's new group Public Image Limited, and in fame's high glare proved himself the creative motor of this vanguard unit. Ten years on, Simon Reynolds finds Wobble's own group Invaders Of The Heart continuing the exploration.

"I t w a s a very angry, neurotic scene, and it was perfect for me!", says Jah Wobble, recalling punk. "I was engulfed in rage. There were a lot of fellow malcontents. I've got very happy memories of it, because I don't know what I would have done without that chance to express myself. I dread to think what would have happened.

"I can't talk about punk sociologically, only subjectively – I just wanted to live. Recently, I popped into a local boozer, and it felt like pre-punk again – a living death, everybody getting tanked up, and then it's back to work in the morning. There's got to be more to life than that. I was very against authority, against formalised structures, and I still am. I'm still very adolescent, without being boringly so. Seeing people in their thirties who haven't matured can be a sad sight. You can't just be against things, you have to offer something as well."

Wobble first emerged as one of the legendary "four Johns" who used to hang out in McLaren and Westwood's boutique: there was John Lydon, John Ritchie (Sid Vicious), the mysterious John Grey, and John Wardle (soon slurred to Wobble). Wobble had something of a thuggish reputation. "I think we were all emotional cripples, back then," he says. But he seems to have rapidly snapped out of that persona, and by the time of *Metal Box*, the music papers presented him as "the nice one" in PIL: the self-educated, Orwell-admiring East Ender, whose dub-quake basslines were the human heartbeat in PIL's dread disco. Like a rollercoaster carriage, they were simultaneously what kept you safe and what dragged you through the PIL terror ride.

PIL were what Lydon had always wanted the Sex Pistols to sound like, an anti-rockist non-band influenced by dub, Can, Beefheart, Peter Hammill. PIL were a repudiation of punk rock's traditionalism and rhythmic naivete. "I actually thought the Pistols were a fucking good band," says Wobble. "But the Pistols were the only real rock band that I loved. Afterwards, John wanted to play in a band where the bass was loud. We used to fuck about with graphic equalizers and customised bass bins, and experiment with putting rock records through the system to see how far you could take the low end. I loved reggae, the bass line moving around the drum beat, which you didn't get much in rock music. Rhythm was always more important to me than melody or harmony. So I picked up the bass and immediately felt very bonded to it. It was very therapeutic, although I didn't understand that at the time."

A S E L F - T A U G H T minimalist-by-necessity, Wobble's aspirations collided midway with those of groups like Can, virtuosos who aspired "downwards" to minimalism, who consciously trimmed their playing of excess flash. "The interesting thing about Can is that they got into rock in their

thirties, after being trained in jazz or avant-garde backgrounds. And they discovered the importance of rhythm. They discovered that if you reduce your playing, the amount of instrumentation, then the music grooves better. Less can be more." After his acrimonious, post-*Metal Box* split from PIL, Wobble got to play with his hero Holger Czukay, Can's bassist, resulting in the 1983 *Snake Charmer* collaboration. Then there was Wobble's new band The Human Condition, a jazzy, dubby, freeform proposition that took the PIL approach a little further. "It was about keeping things logical – not cold and intellectual, but geared to what truly functions, and gives, and makes you feel spiritually satisfied".

The mid-80s were wilderness years for Wobble. "I was in some ways a very sick young man, in others a very positive and brave young man. I used to go out of my way to upset people, I was very self-destructive. I lost patience, I didn't communicate, I was just a drunken bastard. But then I started to envision this beauty, this new way a band from the West could play. In my head, I could hear these eternal rhythms, but in a context that was very up-to-date and contemporary." Wobble was listening to North African, Arabic and Romanian music, sensing the connections between these sounds and the other things (dub, Can) that moved him. But "the shadow side" persisted, and for a couple of dark years Wobble was working on the London Underground, only occasionally doing a show in Europe, "for a laugh".

In 1987 he met guitarist Justin Adams, another musician who was drifting for lack of the right musical context. "I'd followed a similar trajectory out of punk," recalls Justin. "PIL opened my horizons to black music, John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman, dub. At the same time, having spent much of early life in Arab countries, I understood what Wobble was trying to do. In fact, just before we met, I'd actually been thinking, 'I'd really like to play with Wobble.' I'd read these sleeve notes he'd written about healing music." The pair immediately bonded musically, and Invaders Of The Heart was born.

The group were still way out on a limb, and there seemed little prospect of making much happen for their music. They played shows, and recorded an album in Holland. It was the acid house revolution – with its trance-dance vibe, DIY approach to technology, and "anything goes" attitude to sampling – that created the kind of climate in which Wobble could re-emerge. "Acid house did open people's ears towards long, instrumental tracks, weird sounds; it brought back the idea that the music was supposed to alter your consciousness," says Justin.

L A S T Y E A R the Invaders "Bomba" single (released on hep dance label Boys Own and remixed by hep producer Andy Weatherall) was a dancefloor hit. At the same time, Charlie

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Jah Wobble

Gillett became interested in signing the group to his Oval label, which goes through Warners. Suddenly, Wobble was no longer languishing on the margins. The climax came with Wobble's guest appearance this summer on Primal Scream's "Higher Than The Sun". An astonishing single, "Higher" was a resolution of all the myriad changes of the last 15 years, a re-convergence of the post-punk diaspora. In it you could hear shades of Primal Scream's rock classicist phase (Brian Wilson, Love's *Forever Changes*); the "cosmonauts of inner space" vibe of acid house, Sun Ra, and Tim Buckley's *Starsailor*; and a lyric as solipsistic as "Anarchy In The UK" (all about being your own god) except that this time the drug vector was Ecstasy not amphetamine. And underneath it all, most thunderously on Andy Weatherall's "Dub Symphony" mix, was the seismic underflow of Wobble – a beautiful irony, since the earliest incarnation of Primal Scream was a PIL copy band.

And now there's the Invaders Of The Heart's enchanting *Rising Above Bedlam* album. With its seamless mélange of pan-global influences, and singing (by Natacha Atlas and, on a couple of tracks, Sinéad O'Connor) in French, Spanish, and Arabic, *Rising* belongs in Jon Hassell's "Fourth World": a post-modern neo-geography where modern technology and ancient ethnic music mingle to form the polyglot pop of the 21st Century. "Jon Hassell's one of my favourite players," says Wobble. "I much prefer the Fourth World approach to World Music's attitude of treating ethnic musics as museum pieces. We all have an ancient soul, there are these eternal rhythms, but what I do is pick up on those rhythms and bring them up to date. That's the way forward for the world. We've lost so much in the West. There's a great feeling of godlessness. We've lost that communal spirituality. We can learn about that from the Third World. But at the same time, the Third World can learn from us."

Wobble talks a lot about the spirit. Like a lot of his generation, he's made a shift from nihilism towards affirmation, an odyssey from post-punk demystification towards something close to mysticism. *Rising Above Bedlam* comprehends both aspects of Wobble's history in its title – angst and elation, the here-and-now and the transcendent, social realism and spirituality.

"That's what we go for, a lovely balance between neurosis (which I still love), and the spiritual solution to those feelings of alienation," says Wobble. One of his heroes is the late Miles Davis, particularly early 70s albums like *Dark Magus* and *On The Corner*. Miles was a supreme case of an artist who fused nihilism and spirituality; patently a driven, fucked-up person, his music reflected those voodoo energies, yet always grasped out for transcendence. Justin concurs: "What I like about that sort of music is there's this feeling of dread, you feel 'oh no, please don't take me there', but when you release yourself to it, it's beautiful."

Getting more mystical by the minute, Wobble talks about how "everybody has their own musical DNA code", about "redemptive, healing chants", and how you should "allow yourself to give to the world and allow yourself to receive." It

sounds incongruous in his down-to-earth Stepney accent, but those piercing blue eyes burn with sincerity.

"It's all about energy flows. Opening up to your female side, allowing spirit to come into matter. The spirit of love, the spirit of God. You can allow yourself to be transformed, and that's where redemption comes in. Allowing yourself to let the ego go, and be born again."

WOBBLE DISCOGRAPHY:

Public Image Ltd (Virgin)

Metal Box/Second Edition (Virgin)

Paris Au Printemps (Virgin)

Steel Leg Vs The Electric Dread (Virgin)

The Legend Lives On . . . Jah Wobble

In "Betrayal" (Virgin)

Jah Wobble's Bedroom Album (Logo)

The Human Condition

Neon Moon (Island) with Ollie Morland

Rising Above Bedlam (Oval)

guest on Holger Czukay's On The

Way To The Peak Of Normal

various EPs

PUNK WAS all about ego: its drug of choice was speed, a ego-reinforcer. It seems like you've gone from that punk mindset (obsessed with being an individual, paranoid because of all the threats to your autonomy) towards a music that's about oceanic feelings, the urge to merge, to blur the borders of the ego.

"Punk was like saying 'fuck off!'. It was about rejection, cos a lot of those people felt very rejected. Punk was like all those people getting their own back. But that's what happens, karmically – you get your own feelings of negativity back, you're trapped in it. Whereas I'm a greedy bastard, I want everything in life. You can't just pretend that neurosis and feelings of rejection don't exist; you have to embrace that. But you've also got to embrace the need to connect, to love and be loved. You get people who were involved in the punk thing, and then they think 'this is all so negative', and they decide to become a Christian or a Krishna. And that to me is like deciding to take smack or something. It's another form of unreality. And me, I want everything. You've got to own everything about yourself. And then you can integrate when and where you want to integrate."

"The reason I've put so much work into myself is as much to do with understanding the music as for personal therapy. Punk was doomed to failure for the very same reasons that it had to come into being. Did it fail? I don't think I ever thought it could change the world."

As Greil Marcus put it, punk didn't change the world, but it did change the way some people walked through the world. The journey continues. *

"sod good taste . . ."

A direct line of rage and refusal can be traced in music from the revolutionary drive of 60s Free, through underground rock, to many present day improvising musicians worldwide. Ben Watson explores Punk Jazz and talks to current (unknowing) exponents Wilkinson, Fell and Hession.



Photo by Howard Sooley

PUNK JAZZ: THE very word sounds like blasphemy. To pop commonsense, what could be more different than punk and jazz? The one violent and nihilistic, defiantly threadbare, the other practically a marketing term for upwardly mobile lagers and expensive suits. Add to that the supposedly "white" nature of guitar rock and the black roots of jazz and they seem further apart still. But pause here: poor and white versus posh and black are images, not social truths (hence the need for iconoclasm). Punkjazz not only has a history that takes in the Situationists and BYG, Ornette and James Chance, it also has protagonists in the UK.

When the free improvising trio Hession/Wilkinson/Fell played this year at Huddersfield's Off/Shoots they left the audience in a state of shock. AC Temple's guitarist (and sometime Gun Club roidie) was shielding his ears with his fingers. What from? Whoreheat improvisation, full throttle free jazz out of Archie Shepp 1969, but somehow more so: more venom, more noise, more discord, more evil heat. Organiser Graeme Murrell was astonished: "I thought that would be jazz, but . . . you know, I used to be into Napalm Death and Boltthrower and that's what it was like".

Talk of hardcore/jazz crossover and you must mention John Zorn — hardcore's most musically educated advocate, he has frequently hurled his bebop-trained alto into thrash environments (recently recording, for example, with Mick Harris, Napalm Death's drummer). Murrell, though, had not heard of Zorn beyond reading a review of *The Big Gundown*. Alan Wilkinson was intrigued by Zorn's Ornette-thrash opus *Spy vs Spy*, but his baritone has been incubated over ten years of European collaborations and Leeds Termite gigs. Zorn has identified a genuine correspondence: it is no gimmick (this also explains why Zorn's music works).

WHEN YOU speak to the trio, you realize how unctured is any resemblance to punk. These people are dyed-in-the-wool, militant, penniless, serious-as-your-life free players. Born in Ilford in 1954, Alan Wilkinson was turned onto music by seeing The Soft Machine and Jimi Hendrix at the Albert Hall in 1969. Originally a guitarist, he taught himself saxophone. Peter Brötzmann with the Globe Unity Orchestra in Leeds was another turning point (the rest of the trio were there too, then unknown to each other). Bassist Simon Fell comes from Barley in Yorkshire, played in the Huddersfield Philharmonic and led a Mingus-Workshop-type band, Persuasion. Drummer Paul Hession's style is based on jazz drummers like Philly Joe Jones and Andrew Cyrille, but for him the choice is musical freedom or death. So, given the fact that they really can play, was it perhaps instrumental expertise that brought them together?

All three feel that academic jazz is a brake on creativity. Fell

says: "Now you are getting a tradition of jazz education which is oppressive . . . the young people I teach who are consciously trying to work towards jazz seem to have least idea of what it ought to involve. The ones who do the most interesting music are the ones coming from experimental rock or thrash metal".

Hession agrees. Currently on a guitar-building course surrounded by adolescents in Megadeth and Metallica T-shirts, he finds them much more open to ideas about music than people aspiring to be "jazz" musicians. Alan Wilkinson talks with enthusiasm about Jackie McLean and David Murray (players who always play at the top of their form) but explains that his idea of performance derives from too many disappointments: travelling all the way to London to see jazz heroes who do not try to deliver. Wilkinson has resolved to put everything on the line each time.

T H I S G O E S some way to explain the reeling intensity of the trio's music: no room to move, excuse, pretend otherwise. Fell reckons the three have gravitated together because of their desire to play densely and without reserve.

"We are not afraid to go too far. That's what makes other people's music fragmented — people want to *say the picture*. We'll have a climax and carry it further, instead of saying, 'Phew look at that! We say, Sod good taste — go for more!'

This approach has earned the trio a reputation for coarseness and vulgarity in high-minded improvising circles. Actually, Wilkinson is fascinated by sparse, cerebral playing (and speaks glowingly of John Burcher and John Russell) but he recognizes that this is not, finally, his ultimate music:

"It doesn't make me explode. The sight of Shepp's head expanding, sweat pouring off his face when he's going *fou!* *fou!* on the bottom of his horn — that makes me explode with excitement". He says this may stem from his adolescent desire for filthy heavy guitar music. Hession speaks of how he is attracted to "dirt — imperfection, rough edges, lack of polish".

Paradoxically, these players have needed to hone their technique to achieve such imperfections. Unlike hero Paul Lovens, Hession is an incredibly tidy drummer to watch. There are only a handful of bands — Marilyn Crispell's Quinette, Last Exit, Phalanx, Reggie Workman's Ensemble — that can equal them for simultaneous musicality and cathartic excess.

Now, we are talking the essence of what makes jazz great here, and this is notoriously hard to market. How to sell something that is so unstable, that changes, cannot be relied on to provide a certain mood? The full onslaught of Hession/Wilkinson/Fell can win converts when witnessed live, but a music industry geared to selling CDs is not interested in that. The resemblance to the sonic assault of radical rock is no accident: it is protesting the same alienation. The trio defy the domestic isolation of consuming canned music in private.

Punk Jazz

PUNK ITSELF was not always just a set of albums every rock fan should own. In the beginning punk was an attack on the commodity: buying something in a shop was the lowest act a punk could stoop to. "The real fans aren't buying the single," said Malcolm McLaren after the release of "Anarchy In The UK". This is Situationist International lore straight out of Paris '68. Radical black jazz of the late 60s – best documented in the aftermath of May '68 by the Paris label BYG – also registered such utopian hopes. Punkjazz only awaited connection.

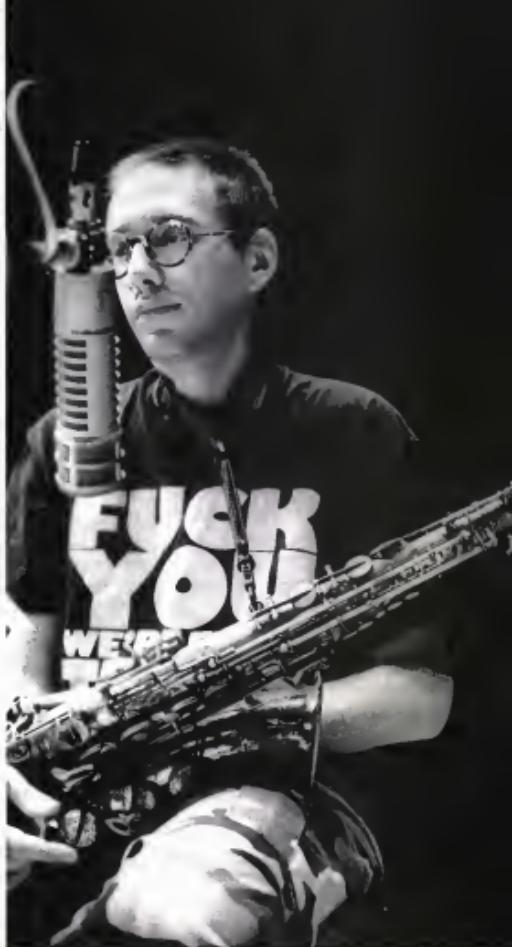
The recent death of Rob Tyner (18th September) removed someone who made such connections. Both Robert Derminer, his very name honours Coltrane's pianist McCoy Tyner. He led the MCS, exponents of a tradition of hardass Detroit rock'n'roll that starts with Mitch Ryder and includes Iggy Pop (and excludes San Francisco's hippie mind-rot). The MCS's debut *Kick Out The Jams* (1968) had liner notes which quoted Leroi Jones and declared that the MCS's music was "the solution to the problem of separation". The credit for the final track "Starship" went to MC5/Sun Ra. This idea of art becoming a politics which opposes capitalist alienation head-on ran parallel to Si's diatribes (though, being American, the rhetoric is sanctified rather than Marxist). The MCS's total music – transcendence via noise and energy – was an essential musical source of British punk. In 1978 Rob Tyner toured with The Clash and wrote it up for the *NME*.

"Anarchy In The UK" was backed with "No Fun", a song from the first Stooges album. Iggy Pop described early rehearsals: "thunderous, nacy music, which would drone on and on, varying the themes. It was entirely instrumental at the time, like Jazz gone wild. It was very North African, a very tribal sound: very electronic". The Stooges' most powerful record, *Funkhouse* (1970), had saxophonist Steven Mackay adding Shepp-like extremities to the power chords. It provided the blueprint for X-Ray Spex and Lora Logic's sax. The trans-spectrum overflow of free jazz threaded its way via the Stooges into the Pistols sound. Without that it would have indeed been the "fast heavy metal" its detractors deplored.

Most jazz players rejected punk as hype, especially when punks boasted of not being able to play. You needed to understand anti-art to suss this scene. Lol Coxhill toured with The Damned, but he was the exception. Ronnie Scott did not book The Vibrators; Gaye Advert was not invited to play at Company Week; ECM Records did not sign The Nipple Erectors.

Ornette Coleman, though, thought differently. He had not followed Miles Davis into the electric world of *Bitches Brew*, seemingly intent on preserving his free jazz as chamber music. In 1969, though, he had released *Ornette At 12*, with his ten-year-old son playing drums. He had also started playing violin and trumpet with no apparent training. This protested against fetishisation of skill in a manner similar to punk. In

Photo by Andrew Pudlak



Zorn

1977 he released *Dancing In Your Head*, all twangy guitars, pressured 2/4 rhythms and mockingly repetitive riffs. It was greeted by the press as Ornette's "punk jazz".

It is interesting to consider why Ornette's harmolodics do indeed sound punk when there are none of punk's hallmarks – feedback guitars, snarled vocals, brevity. Rhythmic impatience and delight in discord (the jazz equivalent of punk noise) and its no-room-for-margins, no-more-spectators onslaught were what made it punk.

The effects were first registered in New York. New Wave (Ramones, Blondie, Talking Heads) was superseded by No Wave. James Siegfried, a hip white kid who had gone to school with Mark Johnson (later Cassandra Wilson's drummer), formed James Chance & The Contortions. He recruited

guitarist Bern Nix from Ornette's band and developed his own version of the new style. Siegfried's defiantly original saxophone was an unholy combination of Captain Beefheart and Maceo Parker. This was punkjazz so pure and beautiful it still makes the conventional categories curl at the edges.

A later version of the band, James White and the Blacks, spawned Defunkt. Ornette's drummer Shannon Jackson ran a band — Decoding Society — which birthed Living Colour, a band still shaking up the whole rock edifice. Hardcore (a word for screwing up punk impact a further twist) was the invention of a black mid-80s outfit who combine formidable post-fusion chops with uplifting political intensity and a singer who moves like Iggy Pop: Bad Brains. The racism of the music

industry obscures the fact that black music is still the prime mover, even where rock is concerned.

PUNK JAZZ keeps resurfacing: a single thread of anti-commodity protest woven from view for marketing convenience. No accident that two of the most inventive forces in "English Jazz", Billy Jenkins and Pinski Zoo, both have a strong affinity to punk. Purer than either, Hession/Wilkinson/Fell cut like a hot knife through a scene rendered torpid by the general turn to fusion (now just another word for the middle of the road). The fact that they are not signed to a major label merely shows how flaccid and timid the jazz revival has become. Ripe for a new Pistols, in fact. *



Photo by Nick Proscchio

Bern Nix Stalks Ornette Coleman

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Chosen by Gary Bane

All Punk pictures and illustrations - except when otherwise credited, and sometimes even then - come from the Jon Savage archive.

New books on Pauline Oliveros,
20th Century Popular Music, New York City Music,
and the Bielefelder Katalog.

The Voice Of New Music: New York City 1972–1982

BY TOM JOHNSON
Het Apollohuis, distributed by
Recommended, £9.50

"I'M NOT questioning the actual merits of the music," runs one of the reviews collected in this book. "I'm merely wondering whether I like the idea of going back to some kind of romanticism, and feeling a little sorry that the era of New York minimalism has come to such an abrupt end." Strong words, perhaps, but which piece do you suppose is being discussed? *The Desert Music*, maybe, or John Adams's *Harmonium* or Glass's *Akhnaten* – or indeed any of those works which yanked American minimalism out of the loft and the art gallery and into the dinner-suited enclaves of the respectable concert hall?

Well, no – the work in question is Steve Reich's *Music For Eighteen Musicians*, reviewed by Johnson in 1975; and what the quotation (and indeed that whole anthology of some 180 reviews) brings home is how embarrassingly slow most of us were to cotton on to the development of minimalism once it had started to happen. Johnson at this time was contributing regular articles to the *Village Voice* – mainly concert reviews, along with the occasional interview and a few more general, historically-orientated pieces – and between them his despatches add up to an overview of the period which is so thorough and inclusive that it would put any official history to shame. (If indeed there was one.)

Johnson is a distinguished composer himself, but quite the most appealing aspect of his writing is his complete insusceptibility to professional rivalry, his openness to the ideas and approaches of his fellow pioneers. This is easily the least intimidating volume of music criticism I've ever read, and although Johnson is clearly alert to the formal and structural nuances of individual works, he never lets us feel that we are dealing with "difficult" music, and never seems to forget that the really important thing about any piece, however elaborate or innovative, is that it should sound good. As a model of how to be receptive and unpretentious at the same time, his articles on LaMonte Young are especially attractive: as when he readily admits to dozing off at one of his concerts,

and yet doesn't see why this reaction should in the least invalidate what Young is doing.

All praise, then, to the Dutch publishers Her Apollohuis for putting this collection together. In its very different way, it does for the 70s what Michael Nyman's *Experimental Music* did for the previous decade: which ought to remind us, of course, that Nyman's book is itself well overdue for a reprint. How about it, boys?

JONATHAN COE

Origins of the Popular Style: the Antecedents of 20th-Century Popular Music

BY PETER VAN DER MERWE
Oxford University Press, £30

ONE PLACE to begin would be on the dust jacket with Paul Oliver, who calls this "an extremely interesting, stimulating, and genuinely original book which at long last examines musically the roots of popular music and the blues". Martin Williams is there too, adding that "van der Merwe has raised fundamental questions about 20th-century music". Crucial is his shift from the historical, sociological or even political emphases of earlier approaches to one concentrating on the substance of the music itself. If the author has much to say that is new, even startling, this is because the relevant material has never been properly looked at in this perspective before.

Has beginnings in the late 1960s were prompted by the horrors of rock, and on digging ever backwards he found that all essentials of 20th-century popular music (in the wider sense) were in existence by 1900, some far earlier. The investigation became global in scope, first settling on what Alan Lomax termed "the old high culture", the chain of communities that existed three or four thousand years ago from the Nile to the Pacific. Hence we are immediately involved with geographical areas and historical periods not usually considered in studies of this subject. Perhaps its establishment of the importance of Arabian influences is the largest of this book's many contributions. Writing of one pre-jazz instrumentation – violin, banjo and percussion – van der Merwe says "the most likely mode of per-



NYC by Andree Potteray

formance would be some sort of heterophony ... a technique typical of the Near East and those parts of Africa (and, we might add, Europe) which have fallen under Near Eastern influence". The ultimate origins of the banjo, incidentally, appear to be not African but Mesopotamian, while the guitar "was a more radically European instrument, and is only a particularly obvious sign of a process of Europeanisation which had been at work from the beginning".

We have long dwelt in what is here nicely called "the golden age of jazz mythology", and many writers are noisily unanimous about the Africanisation of jazz and allied musics. But as the author says, whatever may have happened in the USA "is a fat cry from the survival of African musical cultures in South America, sometimes even down to language. The only distinction we can make with any confidence is that between the



Arab-influenced savannah culture and the rest of West or Central Africa." Indeed, few of the appealingly romantic notions which shape jazz histories survive in the harsh climate of this volume. Thus, "although it is a well-worn cliché to describe African music as 'functional', a great deal of it is functional only in the sense that it gives pleasure to participants and audience." More to the point, conformist scribes are agreed that such characteristics as pentatonicism, rough vocal quality, percussiveness and improvisation are quintessentially African, yet they are, as van der Merwe shows, absent from much African music.

Naturally the situation has its amusing side, as when characteristics of black American music are projected on to all African musics, these same traits then being identified as evidence of 'African survivals in America'. Again, supposed purely 'African'

practices such as call-and-response patterns or singing the third, sixth and seventh degrees of the scale flat occur regularly in folk music from many other parts of the world, including Britain. In such connections the author rightly makes a lot of the effect of "a constant migration of musicians, sometimes forced and sometimes voluntary, promoting the mutual influence of black and white, folk and sophisticated, religious and secular, and in fact every conceivable musical category". As Lomax said, "our best songs and dances are hybrids of hybrids, mixtures of mixtures". Van der Merwe's 27-page chapter titled 'British Origin of the Blues' may, with luck, induce apoplexy in certain quarters, and it seems that even some rock hits like 'Good Golly, Miss Molly' are "heavily Africanised but ultimately of British origin". Is nothing sacred?

This book's unceremonious overturning of much of what we have always believed about the roots of jazz, blues and related musics ought to provide a beneficially disturbing read. It must be stressed that it has only been possible here to touch on a very few aspects of the many far-reaching issues raised by van der Merwe. Absorbing his richly detailed text, with numerous music examples and densely footnoted, is a tough assignment even for a professional musicologist, the more so if one hears many of the recordings he cites and reads at least representative items from his large bibliography (hence the lateness of this review). Its effect should be seismic, but I fear that jazz writers in particular will cover it with large 'Too Academic!' labels and then, perhaps a trifle anxiously, turn their backs.

MAX HARRISON

Software For People Collected Writings 1963-1980

BY PAULINE OLIVEROS
Smith Publications, \$14.95 (available from Recommended Records)

AS AN IMPROVISING composer and people-friendly theorist, Pauline Oliveros has helped pioneer contemporary music's journey towards silence. Eno, Jon Hassell and Harold Budd cruise in her wake.

These pieces, proposals, lectures and dream fragments, first published in 1984, root her current Deep Listening phase in a lifetime devoted to improvising music out of interactions with the environment. Indeed, listening properly to the musical potential of all surrounding noise is Oliveros's first composing principle, and much of her teaching work is about encouraging her students to retrain their ears to hear it.

At first sight, the chapter headings and the book's abundant references to Japanese poets, Zen masters, Alice in Wonderland and the Wizard of Oz would seem to date badly. Don't be put off. Dialogues with Basho can still prove stimulating. Just as her music advocates deep listening, her writing requires close reading, if it's a full yield of its many practical pleasures you're after. Sound sense.

BIBAKOPF

Bielefelder Jazz Katalog 1991

Motor Press Stuttgart

STILL THE most indispensable of guides to what's available in jazz on record, this year's *Bielefelder Katalog* is already invaluable in the work of *The Wire*. The premise is to list all available records on most of the world's principal jazz labels, and while it's spotty on some of the majors — Columbia seems to be covered only by a partial European listing, for instance — much of it is formidably comprehensive.

The value of the book is hugely enhanced by its cross-indexing. You can look up tune titles if you want to discover how many versions of "One Bass Hit" are currently out there; and if you need to check all the records which Ron Carter plays on, they list everything by artist too. Full personnel are also listed under each record as it appears in the company listing.

Of course there are oddities and inaccuracies, such as the same artist being listed twice under different instruments, a weird case of schizophrenia; but otherwise this continues to be a classic reference work for scholars and collectors. Available for 40 DM (including postage and handling) from Leuscherstrasse 1, 7000 Stuttgart 1, Germany.

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BLOW in the DARK

Big Jay McNeely is still astounding the crowds, a-shoutin' and a-honkin'.

**Stuart Nicholson checks out
the original (luminous green and orange)
tenor sax rocker.**

TH E B A C K I N G band are laying down a solid foundation of pumping blues riffs. The MC's voice rises in excitement. "The granddaddy of them all," he roars, "the sax-man who inspired them all — King Curtis and Junior Walker, the ORIGINAL honker, the ORIGINAL screamer, on tenor sax welcome — BIG JAY MCNEELY!"

Offstage a brawny-toned saxophone riffs over the backing and the crowd yell their delight. The saxophone rises in intensity, the solo building and building. Still he remains offstage. The tension is electric. The band keep the audience guessing by looking to the left, then to the right. Still no Big Jay. Suddenly the spotlight turn on the crowd. There, right in the middle, parting them as if they were the Red Sea, is Big Jay, screaming and honking his way to the stage. It's one of the oldest ploys in the music business, but he's made it work

Born in 1928 in Los Angeles, Big Jay McNeely was learning the saxophone just as bebop began sweeping all before it. By the time he was 20 he had a band with Hampton Hawes on piano and Sonny Criss on alto playing The Last Word, a club off LA's famed Central Avenue. Top West Coast beboppers and visiting jazzmen frequently sat-in. "Miles Davis when he first came out of St. Louis," recalled Big Jay, "Howard McGhee, Teddy Edwards, Roy Porter and Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie when they came out to the West Coast."

How come a young musician who learnt alongside the masters didn't remain in jazz?

"Well, I wanted to make some money!" he explained. "I came from a very poor family. That's part of it. The other part is that everyone has to find where they fit in the music stream. I like jazz. I started out playing jazz and I played alongside the greats. But I like to entertain people. One time I wanted to be a comedian, appeared at the Lincoln Theatre, but I belong in music."

IN 1949 he had his first big seller in "Deacon's Hop" on the Savoy label. An early R&B classic, it was based, incredibly, on a Glenn Miller riff. "I had a Glenn Miller record with one of them soft tempos, and I played around with it and came

up with 'Deacon's Hop', and boom — it was a smash."

Other hits followed: "3D", "All Their Wives Are Gone" and his last big hit from the mid-1950s, "Something On Your Mind," a number that has been covered by musicians as diverse as Buddy Guy and Professor Longhair.

His stage act is spectacular. "My act became known for honkin' and screamin', laying on the floor, getting the audiences screamin' and hollerin'," he said with a twinkle in his eye. But as R&B began to be picked up by white musicians and regurgitated as rock 'n' roll, Big Jay realised the big pay-cheques were being collected by another constituency. "If I'd been white with that kind of charisma, I could have made a million dollars. But a pioneer never makes anything," he observed without bitterness.

McNeely was able to reconcile such social inequalities by turning to religion. "I wanted to go to meetings. Jehovah's Witness. You become conscious of your spiritual needs." It meant he had to drop out of music to attend regular worship. For 12 years he worked in the Post Office, and would occasionally play local clubs to SRO audiences. Finally he was asked to record by Ace Records in London. A Grammy nomination persuaded him he'd made the right judgement call and he returned to music after his appearance at the Grammy awards ceremony along with Albert King, BB King, Robert Cray and Koko Taylor.

So Big Jay McNeely is back. No mean blues shouter, it's his dynamic stage presence that gives his blues bite. Sitting on the edge of the stage he'll leap to his feet and underline every word with arching body spasms. But the climax of his act is when he begins a riff much like "Deacon's Hop", disappears off-stage and returns seconds later with a luminous orange and green Conn tenor sax. His hands are in luminous white gloves. The lights go down and for his long, powerful solo, all that can be seen is the ghostly sax and the gloves pivoting around the stage. The effect is as startling as it was back in the early 1950s when Big Jay learnt how to work a crowd.

"They loved it then and they love it now," he said, "People want to enjoy themselves and I help them do it."



Photo by Stuart Nicholson

Songs of love, war and beans



Max Harrison heard the premier premieres at this year's season of the proms. This is his report. He is never tiresome.

THE HENRY Wood Promenade Concerts remain, as they have long been, essentially a crash course in the standard orchestral repertoire. Over a few weeks one can visit a wide-ranging selection of the principal landmarks, and in recent decades this has been in the company of ensembles from several countries with conductors and soloists of international standing. But ever since Sir Henry began them almost a century ago their inherent tendency has been progressive, and each year sees the introduction of a quantity of unfamiliar music, some of it wholly new. In recent times the BBC, which long since took over the Proms, has gone into the habit of commissioning several new items for the occasion, and what follow are notes on the 97th season's world première and on other pieces included that were also having initial British performances.

NO SCREAMING

FIRST, CONDUCTED by Bernard Haitink, came the world première of Mark-Anthony Turnage's "Some Days" (July 21). This sets African and American black poets, the central of five sections being an orchestral tango, the last a blues whose long vocal lines were tenderly inflected by the mezzo-soprano Cynthia Clarey. Only the clarinets, bassoons, strings and harp of the Royal Opera House Orchestra were summoned in support and although this restraint does reflect the emphasis on lyricism in Turnage's recent output, "Some Days" is high-class light music rather than significantly 'new'. Certainly it lacked the impact of his Baconian "Three Screaming Popes" heard at last year's Proms.

A week later came a non-event. We arrived at the Albert Hall on July 28 expecting to hear Barry Wordsworth conducting the world première of Malcolm Williamson's "Myth Of The Cave" for flute (James Galway), chorus and orchestra, first of the season's BBC commissions. It promised much. Williamson's chief source being of course the allegory of the cave in Plato's *Republic*, wherein the composer sees anticipations of

Christian belief and parallels with the aboriginal tribes of his native Australia. Alas, the Master of the Queen's Music – not, frankly, for the first time – failed to deliver.

REMEMBER "THE PANIC"?

THERE WAS better luck with the next BBC commission, receiving its UK première from the BBC Singers under Simon Joly on August 7. This was "Songs Of Love And War" by David Sawyer (who can forget his chamber opera "The Panic"?), and uses sentences, but not the tunes, from a dozen World War II popular songs. As war brings out the worst in the denizens of Tin Pan Alley as in everyone else, the banality of the resulting text can be imagined, and it was a curious, even reassuring, experience to hear this doggerel set to music far superior to that with which it originally was linked. However, though Sawyer spun some agreeably convoluted choral textures there was nothing personal here. The male and female singers were spatially divided on the stage and remained so, there being no happy ending but only an impression of abiding separation.

24 hours later came the world première of Witold Lutosławski's "Chanteclairs Et Chanteables", delightfully sung by Solveig Kringlebotn with the composer conducting a chamber ensemble drawn from the BBC Symphony Orchestra. The text, as in Lutosławski's last vocal work, "Les Espaces Du Sommeil", is by Robert Desnos, a great hero to the present writer and surely countless others because of a brilliant passage he published many years ago beginning, "Ted Lewis, the King of Jazz, is never tiresome . . .". But this time Desnos had children in mind and conjured up animals, flowers, insects. Refined and melodic, Lutosławski's music exactly caught the verses' inconsequential humour.

KALEIDOSCOPIC KINETICS

PREMIÈRES NOW came thick and fast, and on the

very next day, August 9, was heard the first British performance of Magnus Lindberg's "Kinetics" for large orchestra with synthesiser and much percussion, all this supplied by the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra under Jukka-Pekka Saraste. They revealed a dense yet cool sound world, altogether Lindberg's own, hyperactive on many levels, thinning down almost to silence one moment, building up huge walls of notes the next. There was an extraordinary range of colours, evocative of a vast, constantly agitated kaleidoscope. This is a score that would repay much study, and future works by this Finnish composer will be awaited with interest.

A further BBC commission, and one sounding completely un-British, "O Rio", had its world première from the BBC SO under Marthán Barnet on August 12. This is by Martin Butler, already known for his "Tin Pan Ballet" heard at the 1988 Proms. Based on a South American Indian creation myth, this is another work making a brilliant use of the orchestra, highly rhythmic and crammed with bright, dancing colours. In fact the latter are as dazzling as the plumage of all those birds that used to flit about rivers like the Amazon when there were still some trees for them to live in.

MIGRANT BEAN

SOUTH AMERICAN promptings were also responsible for Martin Dalby's "The Maty Bean", this referring to a kind of bean that propagates itself by dropping into the sea and sometimes being carried via the Gulf Stream to the west coast of Scotland. Another BBC commission and given its world première on August 17 by Sir Alexander Gibson with what since last January has been known as the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, this proved to be a dull concert overture, carried through with smooth accomplishment but without striking ideas.

Quite different was Janet Owen Thomas's "Rosaces", composed in 1984 yet only receiving its UK première on August 19 1991. This is a sometimes explosive piece that left no doubt of the Albert Hall organ's power and enormous capabilities. The player was Kevin Bowyer, the phenomenal virtuoso whom we know already for his conquest of Sorabji's seemingly unperformable Organ Symphony No. I (Concinnuum CCD1001/2). He added the London première of Brian Ferneyhough's "Sieben Steine", an even more belated event for this was first heard at the Royan Festival in 1974! Its seven movements form a less extreme instance of Ferneyhough's usual complexity but were as imaginative as ever in the development of their considerable body of material.

UNTOLD RESOURCES

ONE OF the most interesting world premières, from the BBC SO under Peter Eördögs, was of Peter Paul Nash's Symphony on August 30, the penultimate Corporation com-

mission. The elements of this composer's vocabulary are traditional yet these are employed – put together – in new ways. There is no separating his musical discourse from his orchestral writing, which is personal, freshly inventive; in the end an unfamiliar but satisfying overall shape was apparent. Like Lindberg's "Kinetics", this piece was another demonstration of the inexhaustible potential of the symphony orchestra.

On September 6 the European première of "Byzantium" provided another demonstration of my inexhaustible capacity, now operative over several decades, for not getting on the correct wavelength for Sir Michael Tippett. The singer was Faye Robinson, the BBC SO was conducted by Andrew Davis, and the rich verbal imagery of Yeats's poem of the same name drew an extremely varied orchestral response from the composer, who in turn got an ecstatic reception from a capacity audience. I could only shrug my shoulders and walk away.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYBODY

HUGH WOOD claimed in his Pre-Prom talk that his Piano Concerto contains something to offend everyone, but this proved, on September 10, to be the most rewarding of the BBC commissions. The structure is basically conventional, with a sonata form opening movement, jazz variations with quite fascinating textures in the middle, and a final rondo with tricky rhythms reminiscent, again, of South America. A lot of the keyboard figuring, which gives the soloist much to do, is rather like early Messiaen, and the conductor, Andrew Davis (with the BBC SO), referred to the slow movement during the final rehearsal as 'the Messiaen cocktail hour'. Joanna MacGregor, *The Wire's* friend, was splendid in the solo part and so was the equally busy orchestra.

For what little such pronouncements may be worth, I would place Wood's Concerto just behind Lindberg's "Kinetics" and somewhat ahead of Nash's Symphony in a final reckoning. This, however, is in part less of a snap judgement than would normally be the case because the BBC introduced the admirable policy of broadcasting recordings of at least some of the new works. Thus Lutoslawski's "Chantefleurs Et Chantefables" was heard and seen on BBC TV the night after its première, Butler's "O Rio" and Nash's Symphony were likewise repeated on Radio 3, and Wood's Piano Concerto was a couple of weeks later the subject of an entire programme, *In Preparation*, with excerpts from the rehearsals and ending with a further performance.

Equally helpful was Radio 3's broadcasting other works by the composers, Butler's "O Rio" being preceded the night before by a performance of his "Piano Piano", Nash's Symphony by his "A Silent Shower", Wood's Piano Concerto by his Cello Concerto, and on the day of the former's première by Joanna MacGregor giving a lunchtime performance of his Piano Pieces Op. 5. It is to be hoped that this procedure will be extended in the years to come. *

In this month's **SOUNDCHECK:**



All the reviews fit to print and several we were dubious about – including SNOWBOY, LAST EXIT, PHARAOH SANDERS, MEL TORME and BILLY JENKINS.

Above: a young PAUL BLEY gives us his views on his recent notices.
Photo by Bob van Geyenbroek.

wire winner: anarcho-improv



THE EX & TOM CORA

Scrabbling At The Lock

Rec'Dec 99 EX 051D

NOT SO STRANGE, once you hear it. If the Ex, the smartest, most diligent anarcho-collectivist packaging propagandists in all Holland/Europe/The World, haven't yet sprung to mind as good'n' true companions to avant-cellist/Skeleton Crewman Cora, this is only because many minds are lame and limp when it comes to making up gorgeous-notion collabs like this.

Actually it may be the best thing Cora's ever done, from warm low riffling to wild and scribbly wannabe-gypsy top-string play, and proof that all that comedy time-sig jiggery with Firth and others was no one's idea of playing hot (I know it was meant to be "critical" of the babied need for the heat — well HUH to that, we babies eat sweets because they speed us up).

The Ex are still only on first name terms, sleeve-wise. Terre, Kattrin, Luc, Andy, Je-roen on soundscapes (actually G.W. Sok gets a namecheck you could look up, but it probably isn't his/her real name) — but outside this admirably user-friendly anarchist rigour, they just keep quietly push push pushing out that envelope on all the ways they can redraw their no longer primitive, still clear and simple kicky futuristic rock-folk-punk-jazz. Ten years is a long time not to be falling into dulled habits when you're not "real" musicians.

Imagine if Henry Cow'd also put our Re Quarterly mag, and both had been as direct/funny/productive/well-designed and Dutch as they were actually in fact not. You're

thinking of The Ex: and "the right to piss and shit in different colours," as one song puts it. Actually I don't know if they're pro this or anti this it just made me laugh (which Cow never did, ever — but this is that baby thing again, no?).

Their mag comes in lots of papery bits, with a nice little shopping bag to put it all in. Their music is dense and down-the-line, distantly allusive, subtle, grainy, open, full and proudly, aerily dissident. Fact is, they like connecting, but they're not going to not say what they wanted anyway to say. More.

HOPEY GLASS

Information: The Ex, PO Box 635, 1000 AP Amsterdam, Holland.

wire winner: double bass

BARRY GUY AND BARRE PHILLIPS

*

ARCAS

Maya MCD 9101 CD

BOTH OF THESE two master bassists are used to solo playing, both in the studio and in performance, and they've both done bass duos too. So there's no shortage of experience here. If anything, Barry and Barre sometimes give us just a tad *too much*: at a whisker under 76 minutes, there's an enormous amount of bass food for thought here, with all aspects of the instruments explored, itemized and expanded in the course of intense, virtuouso dialogues.

Yet the music has a soothing subtext too, for all its formidable and packed structure. The sonority of the bass is never neglected. Guy long ago staked out the most extreme territory for his instrument, but he's also found a splendid medium between songful music and hard-bitten improvised lines, and Phillips has always secured an almost hillbillyish simplicity which peeks through his most complex ideas.

Complex this all is, to be sure. I would rather refer you to Steve Lake's impeccable sleeve notes than offer my own descriptions of the tracks, but for the record there are 12 pieces, the first over 20 minutes in length, others only two or three minutes; a couple of solos each, mostly duos, arco, pizzicato,

embellished, naked. Like most modern improvisers, they eschew the old patterns of call-and-response in favour of a deeper, less signalled interplay which remains as palpable to willing ears but adds fresh levels of surprise.

At first I thought the sound was a bit dull, but that has more to do with the sound *level*: it seems rather remote, but turn your amplifier up and the sonority rings through in a very shapely and attractive fashion. For there's a lot of pretty music here as well as oaken thunder and resinous lightning, sampling the slowly sunsetting feel of the closing "New Earth" as one example.

The best title, though, is "Warrior Spirits". In its driving creativity, this kind of music continues to represent fighting talk. Magnificent

MIKE FISH

wire winner: speedmetal noise

OLD

*

Lo Fiex Tube

Earsie MOSH 31 LP/MC/CD

PAIN KILLER

*

Guts Of A Virgin

Earsie MOSH 45 LP/MC/CD

IT SHOULDN'T, says a colleague, have taken John Zorn's hyperactive interest to have made the point: something was happening here before grownup intervention, and we should have been alert to it.

Which is fair enough, but more a reflection on us than him (he was listening, we weren't). Electric speedmetal noise — Japcore from Tokyo, Thrash from Milwaukee and finally Napalm Death from Norwich — had mutated far out beyond its earliest clichés, had started either sucking its singers (*Blind Idiot God* never even hired one), or requiring that they bellow, groan, grunt or mutter in the abstract. Last Exit we'd made allowance for — they had history, sort of, and we whispered *Agharta* to ourselves when doubtfully sidled up. *Borboromagus* we respected without ever buying their records.

The Pain Killer set is as remarkable for the

fact that Zorn and Laswell have buried the hatchet and played together again – the 80s are obviously over – with Napalm Death's drummer Mick Harris completing the trio. Molten, torrential noise, beginning with a shriek and thunderously huge rhythm, and building from there. The second cut is 18 seconds long, the fifth a mere five, and so on.

Old – formerly Old Lady Drivers – are less utterly in-yer-face, and because they thrive on guitars not saxophones, less forced and richer. They're no queer. Their bass player used to be in Soundgarden and Nirvana (that's to say, overground, "ordinary" metal – if this disconnection is still worth making), and their drummer is a programme that the guitarist sets in advance. Zorn guestes on the title track.

The language for describing the music has fallen a long way behind the languages used playing it, words like noise, chaos, turbulence etc obscuring a huge, intelligent, forward-motion variety of sound-transformations. If volume's really such a problem, then steer clear – for everyone else, these two records go right next to your Ayler/Bailey/Parker selection.

MARK SINKER



WIRE WINNER: latin groove

**SNOWBOY AND
THE LATIN SECTION**

Descarga Mambo
Juno LP-90 LP/CD/MC

Ok, I'll admit that I only went to the jazz club of Dingwalls-on-a-Sunday (to which this album almost gets dedicated) once. But the album isn't just for the sleeve noted "hard

core jazz dancers to whom I'm most committed" – it's aimed at many Latin-inspired dancers. It's a "club" record only in that its hard-wearing carpet of percussion is for dancing feet.

A "Descarga" is apparently slang for a Latin jam – this is a recording of a band assembled to perform live and fast. It's an approach which allows for rough edges in context, although in fact the overall production consistency results in a well-maintained smooth-edged groove – so well maintained that in listening terms the change of pace with the beginning of "Snow-Snow-Quack-Quick-Snow" becomes welcome. Band-member Chris Kibble's off-beat piano, particularly on his solo on the Frank Sinatra "ballad" "In The Wee Small Hours Of Morning", is stirring, but the guest's contribution is from one-track guest New York trombonist Joe DeJesus. His playing demands more than the rest, although more interplay – rather than just solo turns – might have given just a little more feeling of involvement and size, here with the extra guest, but also elsewhere. But leader Snowboy (aka Mark Cottgrave) is a tight, energetic percussionist whose broad percussion itself makes the band feel bigger. (I presume, by the way, that the sometimes accompanying drums are provided by someone uncredited.)

The approach is intentionally raw and rousy (unless "roasty", as it says on the sleeve, is a word!) and the groove is the priority it achieves ANDREW POTHECARY

**ART ENSEMBLE
OF SOWETO**
America – South Africa
DW 8381 CD

FROM URBAN Bushmen to their "Great Black Music, Ancient to Modern" Ingo, the Art Ensemble of Chicago's connection to other black musics and African music especially is obvious. A couple of years into the AEC's association with the Amabutho Male Chorus – thus the Art Ensemble of Soweto – and you could still ask how do you actually combine the structured, note-perfect choral harmony of the Chorus with the conductorial

chaos and harmonic (and mis-harmonic) rhythms of the Ensemble? Judging by this recording, the answer is minimally. The group heading is deceptive, leading you wrongly to expect an explicit combination throughout the album: it's really as it's subtitled, *The Art Ensemble Of Chicago With Amabutho*.

Only the admittedly lengthy opening track "U.S. Of A – U. Of S.A." is a joint presentation, more or less successfully mixing a percussive AE with a whistling, shouting, ululating Amabutho, bracketed by South African-inflected horns, keyboards and drums and the repeated choral vocal "America – South Africa". It's enjoyable though for me somewhat let down by an American-accented voice-over which is as much Public Service Broadcasting-sincere as Gil Scott Heron – and somehow dated – while the American-then-African-accented repetition of a list of black fighters hardly achieves a combination of styles, and takes you no further than the list of musicians in *Do The Right Thing*.

Apart from "America" – entirely Amabutho's song with Elliot Ngubane's clear lead vocal fronting the choral response, beautifully sung in classically choral style – the rest is all AEC with no particular South African link. "Eric T" is a shortish, quiet track, with blue sax and trumpet linking to a lyrically film-themeish center. "You Got It" develops from opening Bowie trumpet noises and various percussion, via a sombre bass-sax link and further staccato and breathy horns, to some rich drumming, tentative horn section mimicry, muted trumpet and a musical-box tune (in other words classic AEC multiplicity and exploration). It ends with the loping, sadlong, affectionate "Zola's Smile"; flute, soprano and attractive trumpet.

Don't expect a combination beyond the first track and you'll be rewarded.

ANDREW POTHECARY

SAMUEL BARBER
*Symphony No 1 &
Overture: The School for Scandal*

AMY BEACH
Symphony in E minor (Gaelic)
Chandos American Series CHAN 1058 CD

CHARLES IVES*Piano Sonata No 1***SAMUEL BARBER***Piano Sonata and Four Exercises Op 20*

Gilles Classics 11072

THEY MIGHT be giants yet, but for the moment the field is cleared of the windmilling arms and reputations of Bernstein and Copland and Thomson, and it's possible to look back a little into the middle distance they obscured. There has been growing interest recently in the work of the Bostonian George Whitfield Chadwick, a composer who receives a staggering twelve double-column pages in American *Grove*, and not a flicker of recognition from the average record-buyer. Amy Beach was very much a follower of Chadwick's heavily chromatic style. She is, though, more thoroughly Romantic in her appropriation of certain themes and tonalities. The "Gaelic" symphony – her only one – transcribes two Irish folk tunes in its pivotal third movement, spinning them out in a slightly ewish version of orthodox late-Romanticism. It isn't a work that will radically reorient the history of American music but it does suggest the background out of which the great American modernists emerged, and that has been too long forgotten.

Samuel Barber numbered only two symphonies, withdrew much of the second, and preferred to call the others "Essays". The ill-fated second was premiered in 1944, the year of Beach's death. It and the *Four Exercises* for piano from the following year belong much more to Beach's world than to the world of Morton Gould's exactly contemporary second symphony or of John Cage's first prepared piano pieces. It's no accident that Barber's best-known work, lent a spurious cachet by being used at John Kennedy's funeral, should be the swooning *Adagio* for strings.

The first symphony develops quite conventionally from three related themes in the first movement. Apart from minor variations, notably an avoidance of straightforward recapitulations, it proceeds without complication or undue drama to a highly effective interweaving of all the basic material into a single closing theme.

Set alongside Ives, Barber's piano music

sounds even more conventional. Joanna MacGregor has already given sterling performances of Ives on the valuable *American Piano Classics* CD. Here, her strengths and weaknesses are almost equally on show. Her tough approach quite suits the folksy *Four Exercises* and Ives's monumental sonata, but her pedalling is much too fierce and abrupt for the Barber and she clearly overstates the jazz and blues cadences, which are more Bartókian than authentic in any case. Nonetheless, she is one of the most significant young pianists of basically American repertoire to have emerged since Bennett Leimer.

BRIAN MORTON

**HARRY BECKETT***Passion And Possession*

ITM 1456 CD

MARILYN MAZUR/**HARRY BECKETT/****CHRIS MCGREGOR***Grandmother's Teaching*

ITM 1428 CD

LIKE MANY another musician who was part of the 60s avant-garde, Harry Beckett has relaxed back into the mainstream. This disappoints some people whilst tending to confirm for the rest of us that the so-called free-form movement was no aberration, but rather, a proper stage in the evolution of the music and in the arming and equipping of the musicians themselves. It all seems far away now, but it helped shape our perception of everything that was played after, even of

those genres that had developed before, and continued after, the days when free jazz was fashionable.

Anyway, Beckett was always fundamentally a very lyrical player. On *Passion And Possession*, a series of duets with Keith Tippett, Joachim Kuhn and Django Bates, the partnership of solo brass instrument and piano provides him with the opportunity to exercise that aspect of his playing at length. Although all the pieces here are his own compositions they mostly sound like careful, respectful readings of standards, and the album reminds me of the Ruby Braff duets with Ellis Larkins and Dick Hyman. Only on the tracks with Tippett, saved until the end, is there any sign of wandering near the edge. This is an enjoyable set, showcasing Harry's elegant phrasing as writer, trumpeter and flugelhorn player.

Beckett used to play with McGregor in the Brotherhood of Breath, but the reunion on *Grandmother's Teaching* finds them in a very different context. The tunes are written by Beckett, McGregor and Johnny Dyani, and most are given busy, percussive, funk-based arrangements, though there is a duet for Harry and Chris. Other featured solos are bassist Peter Kowald and tenor and soprano saxophonist Wolfgang Schmidtke. I'm confident that I wouldn't have identified McGregor in a blindfold test but Beckett's characteristic sound is not swamped by the mass of electronics, and especially on the up-tempo pieces those stinging flurries of burred notes are unmistakeable. Purist old fart that I am, I feel I should be most impressed with the duos collection, but I got more of a buzz from this set.

BARRY WITHERDEN

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S04

PAUL BLEY GROUP*Live At Sweet Basil*

Soul Note 121235 CD/LP

PAUL BLEY*12 (+6) Is A Row*

hat ART CD 6081 CD

IT SEEMS peculiar to think that Bley was once under-represented on record (like Cecil Taylor). Now he seems to be constantly licensed by record-makers. In addition to new stuff, the material from his own label Improvising Artists Inc – which enjoyed a brief lifespan in the 70s – is now reappearing on CD. *Turning Point* offers most of the session from March '64 which was previously reissued in its entirety on Savoy (though only on LP), with the original make-weight of a couple of '68 two-tracks still present. Why not the whole session? And what about the lost session from a month earlier, by the same group? Anyway, the remarks in *The Wire* 52 stand revision: a superb quartet, making tough, modern, driven music, as sparse and free-flowing as it often is.

Quint Song is a bit too diffuse for me. There is some fine interplay between Bley's piano and Connors' guitar, but Giuffre (on alto flute, clarinet and tenor) is oddly detached. He's almost annoying on the title tune, which features a fine, growing dialogue between the other two. And some of the other tunes sound like loose bits of jigsaw. You never see the big picture.

The Sweet Basil date features Bley with John Abercrombie on guitar, Red Mitchell on bass and Barry Altschul on drums. An unlikely line-up indeed, and sure enough the music is often messy and has its incommunicado moments. But it's alive: There are three standards, a Bley original ("Blues Waltz") and a thunderous reading of "When Will The Blues Leave?" – which Mitchell played with Ornette on its first appearance on record. The bassist is rather the square member of the group, though often hard to hear and happiest when the music is at its least wayward, as on "My Old Flame". Altschul seems too noisy, but Bley sounds to be enjoying himself, and has a few devilish touches, like the huge BOOM! he uses to blow our "Flame".

The hat ART date is much more substantial. Here are eight solos and ten duos or trios

with Hans Koch on various reeds (including contrabass clarinet) and Franz Koglmann on flugelhorn. While all are improvised, some use tone rows by either Webern or Schoenberg as starting points, although these are at best obliquely referred to. Peter Pfister's excellent sound draws a cold but magnetic picture of Bley's distinctive touch: with his brittle voicings and plucked strings, it's a chill, wasteful style that lets you visualise every nerve in Bley's music. Koch and Koglmann help to create some unsettling discussion – try the pointillism of "Trio 2" or the almost feverish lines of "Trio 4" – but it's Bley's manner, a surely unique mixture of bluff humour and piercing, pinpoint insight, which covers the waterfront.

MIKE FISH

**JOHN COLTRANE***Coltrane Time*

Blue Note CDP 78861-2 CD

Visit To Scandinavia

Jazz Door 1210 2CD

Lies In Japan

Impulse GRD 4-102 4CD

COLTRANE. MASSIVE, overwhelming, exhaustive . . . they may be clichés, but the body of Trane's work does everything to make them truisms. *Coltrane Time* was originally issued under Cecil Taylor's name (as the oddly-titled *Stereo Drive*) but the pianist has little influence over the session: Kenny Dorham, surprisingly, sounds the most assured man here, and Chuck Israels and Louis Hayes supply a conventional hand-bop

beat which is useless for Taylor's purposes. So he mostly comps, obliquely. It was 1958, yet Coltrane was already sounding colossal, his solos beautifully articulated if not particularly well shaped.

By the European tour of 1962, where *Visit* was recorded, the Coltrane of legend was already firmly established. Most of this set derives from the Stockholm concert of 19 November, with two tunes cut three days later in Copenhagen: all of it has been out before, elsewhere. The sound is quite good on the first disc, yet mysteriously roughens on the second, and gets distinctly bad on the Copenhagen tunes: Garrison is barely audible throughout, and Jones's sound becomes coarse at moments of intensity. Many would argue that this is Trane's greatest period – fully into uncharted exploration, yet with a toehold retained on the song forms of such as "The Inchworm". There is a gorgeous "Nauma" – listen to how McCoy Tyner develops ideas from the leader's preceding solo – and typically torrential readings of the standard *Teebe* book. Everything he did on this tour is worth hearing, I'd say, and this graphic portrait is no exception.

Live In Japan doubles up the material which Steve Lake discussed in *The Wire* 88. Since there is a little over four hours of music here (the sleeve note says that the two hours-plus of discs three and four were performed without a break on the stage), an end-to-end playing is about the closest we can now come to hearing an authentic Coltrane concert. Garrison and the leader are the only survivors from the Stockholm recording. Alice Coltrane, Pharaoh Sanders and Rashied Ali are the new players, and there is the chance to hear Trane doing "My Favourite Things" on alto, two different views of "Peace On Earth" and marathon marches through "Crescent" and "Leo".

Of course there is dead wood in the music: Ali's solo bits aren't anything much, Garrison's two long features are boring, and sometimes the searching for catharsis is, as with any journey, frustratingly time-consuming. But settling for 'highlights' with Coltrane (and Sanders, for that matter) seems pointless. You either immerse yourself in the grand, miasmic, chaotic totality of it, or you leave it completely alone. As a document of late Coltrane, this is surely unsurpassable.

MIKE FISH

**FALLA/MILHAUD/
STRAVINSKY**
*From The Salon Of
The Princess De Polignac*
 ASV DCA 758 CD

THERE ARE three tales here, or rather four, since de Falla's *El Retablo De Maese Pedro* ("Master Peter's Puppet Show") has a play within a play. With Milhaud's *Les Malheurs D'Orphée* and Stravinsky's *Reward*, it makes up an engaging programme of commissions by the Princess De Polignac, beautifully played by the London-based Matrix Ensemble on their first commercial disc. The Princess was a daughter of Isaac Singer, inventor of the sewing machine. She married into the French aristocracy and enjoyed patronising (in both senses) modern composers. The singers who gave the salon premiere of de Falla's work in 1923 were not invited to stay and dine, since, as the Princess said, "I never have tradesmen to dinner" (unless they're sewing machine magnates).

El Retablo is a delightful adaptation of two chapters from *Don Quixote*, in which the Don is entertained by a tavern performance of Master Peter's puppets. The Princess wanted an opera entirely for marionettes, so de Falla produced an ingenious puppet-play within a puppet-play. Don Quixote repeatedly interrupts the puppet-show and eventually "rescues" the royal hero and heroine when they are pursued by Moors; the mini-opera ends with his hilarious misplaced paean to knighthood.

Dalla explores styles of Spanish music of the past, so to that extent the work is neo-classical. Neo-classicism of a harsher, more brittle variety is heard in Milhaud's adaptation of the Orpheus legend, completed in 1925. His attempt to project "a total atmosphere of grandeur" through a set of tableaux for vocal quartet and chamber ensemble does strike this listener as quaint in a different way, however. Stravinsky's *Reward* takes us back in time a little, since it dates from just before that composer's own neoclassical period which began in 1920. It's a rather nasty "barnyard fable" about the Cock, the Fox, the Cat, and the Goat taken from Russian folk-tales, with the Hungarian can-can prominent in a small orchestra.

None of these works is heavyweight, but they are entertaining and it's good to have

them on disc. It is surprising that Robert Ziegler's Matrix Ensemble, who have a reputation for programming that's far from run-of-the-mill, have taken this long to get onto a commercial recording; I hope they've got more of their unusual compilations in the pipeline.

ANDY HAMILTON

**THE ORIGINAL
DOUG HAMMOND TRIO
FEATURING
STEVE COLEMAN**
Perspicuity
 L+R CDRJL 45031 CD

DONALD HARRISON
Fall Circle

Sweet Bush Inc. 660-55-005 CD



DONALD HARRISON
For Art's Sake
 Caddr CDD79501 CD

STEVE COLEMAN is probably the foremost saxophonist of his generation (he was born in 1957). Curiously, this becomes clear from albums he's recorded as a sideman, rather than those he's recorded under his own name. But his own records under the M-Base banner, although eminently fashionable, are jazz-funk under another name. Nothing wrong with that, but it simply doesn't do any favours to Coleman's alto style, rather it imposes constraints with its tight rhythmic structures and its limited harmonic movement.

Doug Hammond is no Jack DeJohnette and Muneer A. Faatah no David Holland,

but even so *Perspicuity* gives Coleman space. It reveals his gift for conventional melodic development rather than being driven by the rhythmic considerations imposed by M-Base, where the shapes of his solos are delineated by speed, tonal strength and choice of intervals. What comes over here, perhaps more strongly than on any of his previous work, is Coleman's bebop roots. Parker looks closer to Coleman's style than he's been prepared to reveal until now. He sits in the shadows of Coleman's rhythmic construction, his harmonic choices and in dynamic shading, surfacing in the expected, "Cherokee", and the unexpected, originals by Hammond on the title track and Faatah, "Heart Of Quiet Resignation".

While Coleman stepped outside bop to move his style forward, fellow alto saxophonist Donald Harrison strained at the limitations of bop from within. His punctuated phrasing and angular lines were the most surreal of any musician tolerated within Father Blakely's Messengers. *Fall Circle* comes from May 1990, where he shares the front line with up-and-coming guitar whiz Mark Whitfield, a protege of George Benson. It also marks the appearance of pianist Cyrus Chestnut. Both combine to take this album out of the Neo-Classical rut.

Harrison's style cunningly conceals any obvious antecedents and has a power and poise that should be attracting more attention. A young lion once, he's now in no-man's-land between a brilliant star of the future and elder statesman (he's 32). Whitfield's more orthodox, scurrying lines leap and lope with controlled abandon. Harrison does as much as he can within the structure of the tradition, superimposing two time signatures on "The Force", returning to his second line roots for "Bye Bye Blackbird" and allowing solos to dictate both mood and tempo during their solos on "Let's Go Off".

For Art's Sake, recorded six months later, is a typical club jam on familiar themes. Marion Jordan on trumpet replaces Whitfield and Christian McBride, the 18-year-old prodigy, comes in on bass. Out of the studio, Harrison is far more declamatory and purposefully perverse in his note choices. Chestnut too is less inhibited and emerges as a player for the future. On these albums Coleman and Harrison show, from either end of the telescope, that bebop lives. Not pre-

served in aspic but as jumping-off point to find an individual voice. It takes time. But both players, in their own way, are getting there.

STUART NICHOLSON

MAKI ISHII

Works

Deon C076812

It is a cultural oddity characteristic of our time that Japanese composers like Ishii (born 1936) only became aware of their own ancient traditions after they had familiarised themselves with modern European music. As a pupil of Blacher and Rufer at the Berlin Hochschule he knew all about serial technique and its many proliferations, about neoclassicism etc. But Gagaku, Bunraku and the deep-laid symbolism of these musics and of others related to them came only later.

Ishii is now established as one of the composers who succeeded in writing music that, in the words of Wolfgang Barde, in the thoughtful essay which accompanies this 79'18" CD, "comes to terms with the characteristic aura, sound ideals and dignity of Japanese tradition" without abandoning what he learnt in Europe. One might say that, in some of his earlier pieces at least, Ishii employed techniques from the latter place to express an essentially Japanese sensibility. However, like Yan and Takematsu, he is now beyond the stage of heeding Japanese or European precepts, and follows the dictates of his own imagination.

Typical is "Lost Sounds III", which, he says, is concerned with "the rehabilitation of the consonance" (as opposed to the famous emancipation of the dissonance), although this is done "in a circumspect manner". A sense of the eternal passing of time is sustained right through this score by an "endless melody" heard on a solo violin in topmost register and by the contrasted multi-layering (a favourite procedure of Ishii's) of melodic fragments in the orchestra. Alas, there is no space to discuss the other three works included, his "Afro Concerto", "Polaritäten" and "Fusha", but each is rewarding in its particular way. They all receive authoritative performances from the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra under the composer and are beautifully recorded.

MAX HARRISON

THE JAZZ PASSENGERS

Live At The Knitting Factory

Label: EMY125 CD

The Jazz Passengers are hitch-hikers on jazz's musical highway. They cadge lifts from swing, free jazz, be-bop, indeed, any style that suits them.

Their live album evinces a quirky irreverence and recalls a Tom Waits stealth and Art Ensemble whackiness. The compositions are often manic and skittish (Hank Mobley's "Reunion" is treated to a start-stop be-bop reworking), tongue-in-cheek (Thiele And Weiss's "Wonderful World" is exuberantly sung with the vibes resonating wildly) and they evoke images and moods with simple harmonic structures ("We Are The



Parisians" evokes the dark romanticism of the city, "Jazz Passengers In Egypt" has a calm, exotic serenity).

The Jazz Passengers are a project led by saxophonist Roy Narhanson and trombonist Curtis Fowlkes (who once blew with the Lounge Lizards) and these gutsy improvisers are very much to the fore. Squeaking, squealing, growling and sliding in between blistering, more conventional melodic runs, they both revel in this ordered chaos. The arrangements are often dressed with too obvious dynamics, though, and the predominance of tunes that start softly and crescendo into a noisy barrage becomes a tad tiresome after just over 70 minutes of music.

It's a curiously engaging album for its humour and intelligence. Very Knitting Factory.

Laura Connolly

BILLY JENKINS

Big Fights No. 1

Billy Jenkins v. Steve Arguelles

VOTP VOCA 908 MC

Big Fights No. 2
Billy Jenkins v. Steve Noble
VOTP VOCA 909 MC

Big Fights No. 3
Billy Jenkins v. Thebe Lipere
VOTP VOCA 910 MC

ALONG WITH table tennis, boxing has long been a helpful analogy to help understand some of the processes of collectively improvised music, less because of its basic machismo and aggression (though those can also be factors) than the aspects of interaction, speed, unpredictability and precision to which both forms aspire. Guitarist Billy's taken the analogy to one of its logical conclusions and made three 'concept albums' out of it, all of which were replicated in performance at this year's Outside In festival.

Each cassette contains twelve three-minute guitar and percussion bouts started and finished by a bell. This form certainly affects the music; sometimes a development is interrupted by the bell, sometimes they seem to waste time waiting for it, and sometimes they might have chosen to end a piece elsewhere. After that the boxing analogy pretty much fails because one would not be too hard pressed to find examples of improvised music which contained either more boxily contrariness and aggression (Stock, Hausen and Walkman) or more boxily interaction and precision (Spontaneous Music Ensemble) than these.

Arguelles plays nicely, occasionally he's contradictory though he's mostly 'supportive' in the classic drummetty manner. Maybe he knows Billy too well for this sort of game. Billy plays it as perversely as possible and his guitar (without getting into the 'Billy Jenkins: Genius or Wanker?' dispute) ranges from delicate and detailed to the most puerile excesses.

Not so the Noble barrie. The drummer seems to push the guitarist out of his more usual territory and into some of the most interesting improvising he's recorded. I think this is also the best recorded playing I've heard from Noble. No bullshit here, but

real detail and dynamic interplay, real work going on.

The bouts with Lipere, the first time the two have played together, are more obscure. They spend much of the time creeping around each other, most of the loaded moments seeming to happen in spite of the combatants rather than because of them. Oddly, the final round, by which time they seem to be completely ignoring each other, is the closest any of the sets gets to real boxing and is also the most satisfying – the problem has at least been clearly stated.

RICHARD SCOTT

VERNARD JOHNSON

I'm Alive

Elders Notebooks 7559-61150-2 CD

If VERNARD JOHNSON wasn't a gospel musician he could clean up in the construction business, since the sound of his horn can undoubtedly burn paint, cut garders, and clear undergrowth. Johnson, a Kansas-raised saxophonist, claims when he found God and stopped playing modern jazz it cured his chronic asthma; he loosely resembles Junior Walker in breadth and force, but effectively the noise he unleashes makes Albert Ayler sound like Paul Desmond, and here he directs it at eleven gospel tunes (including "Oh Happy Day", "Wade In The Water" and "When The Battle Is Over") in the company of a gospel choir led by a preacher and a red-blooded septet including organ, piano, guitar and percussion.

You'd need to be a something of a fan of the genre already to handle nearly three-quarters of an hour of devotional leavings, but the blazing mid-range warble of Johnson's vibrato, his long high notes over the choir on the title track, his repeated yearning soars into the upper register and the thrashing codas on "When Troubles Burden Me Down" are so spine-chillingly sustained as to ignite even the most casual interest. "I just want to call the name of Jesus," says Johnson to his vociferous live audience before the blistering knees-up of "Call Him On My Horn", and if the Almighty didn't hear that firework display going off then we can safely conclude Nietzsche was right.

JOHN FORDHAM

LAST EXIT

Kahn

ITM 1446 CD

PICTURE FOUR iconoclasts of improvisation, years of testing the structure of music to destruction behind them, masters of guerrilla tactics, coming together to provoke, alarm, amuse and entertain each other and the audience with the bawling, brawling, tumbling accumulation of their experience. Imagine the serrated machine-wound slashing of the guitar jabbing into the interstices between the hoarsely wailing reeds and the viscera-prodding boom of the bass. Now stack them all above a cavalry charge headed by a figure with locks streaming in the vibration-displaced air, yelling the battle cry



of the king of ice-cream.

Recorded in concert four days before the Paris appearance that supplied the material for *Last Exit*, the tapes for *Kahn* seem to have bounced around between Laswell, Enemy Records and Ulli Blobel since 1986. The CD has been available in Europe for over a year. I just about resisted buying it in Geneva for the equivalent of £23 last summer, and the wait has added an exquisite piquancy to its eventual sojourn under the gimlet eye of the laser (*wink down, Barry* – Ed.)

More relentless (even) than the other Exit albums *Kahn* opens with the knock of "Hard School", splintering the door with a debut as disarmingly devastating as "Discharge" from the Paris set. The syllabus runs the gamut from Anarchy and Abstraction to Zest and Zaniness via Mayhem and Maelstroms. Sonny Sharrock oddly evokes both Hendrix and the Mangus-Dolphy dialogues in a crazy,

clanging solo passage, revelling in the opportunity to diffuse the rainbow after a decade-long public lay-off "Brain Damage" – that's the name of a tune, you unders! and – precedes "Taking A Beating". Exit likes to turn things around. On "Damage" Ronald Shannon Jackson's drums lead us into a New Orleans parade and, as always, his sharp thunder reviews the varied dance genes that reeled us from the Second Line. Brozman's reeds are as vein-burstingly majestic as ever, fanfares for some arcane rite, and Laswell's bass stalks the ritual site, whipping in refugee apostates. A typical Exit melee, *Kahn* packs it all in: free jazz, blues, thrash metal, hardcore, R&B, and Shannon's surreal soul-shouting

BARRY WITHERDEN

LYDIA LUNCH

Queen Of Siam

Widowspeak/UFO UFO/WSP LP1 LP

No one ever tells me anything. *Queen Of Siam* creeps back out, Lydia's sinister torch-song masterpiece: my old copy's been worn to see-thru for years, and now Clint Foeus has remastered up the sound to glistening. And no one told me.

Why *Siam* works is because it's such an improbable garbage-jazz lunch off her normal course, her classic obnoxious glory. Before this, in the 70s, she was Teenage Jesus, most horrible bitch-brat in all New York. For the latter part of the past decade, she's been growing into a magnificent Swamp Empress/Fishwife, sucking in her breath and standup-haranguing all of lying, violent maledom. She has phrase control a jazzman would weep for, and all she does is yell.

Which is fine, except you have to play the records virtually in caves in faraway valleys – don't let the neighbours hear "Dear Daddy", unless you enjoy porn squad raids. In *Siam*, though, she croons low songs, sort of. The one and only time, a bored and nasty vamp, with real-life copshow soundtrack arrangements (courtesy the Billy ver Planck Orchestra: Billy wrote the Flintstones themerunner). Whining, sneering, croaking: to a densely slinky No Wave Nelson Riddle, grinding backwards tapes, partering atonal piano, and every kind of bent guitar.

I'd say masterpiece, only she'd kill me.

HOPEY GLASS

JOHN McCABE*Transatlantic Piano*

Continuum CDD10289

CHRISTOPHER O'REILLY*Help! Adams/Brown/Sessions*

Albany TROY038-2

ALAN FEINBERG*The American Romantic*

Argo ARS030-2

THE MAIN works here are Aaron Copland's and Elliott Carter's sonatas on the second of McCabe's CDs, and Roger Sessions's Sonata No.1 from O'Reiley, each being a turning-point in the proliferation of American piano music. Earliest is that by Sessions, from 1931, the first major transatlantic piano sonata since Ives and Griffes. Its essence is in long, flexible lines, tonal but with much chromatic extension, this leading in two directions – to thematic development via melodic growth and to polyphonic textures, this last giving rise to much rhythmic complexity. O'Reiley plays this tough yet refreshing piece extremely well, and McCabe is about equally good with Copland and Carter, using the remarkable Fazioli concert grand on which I commented briefly in a recent Beethoven review.

Copland's Sonata (1939–41) reconciles the harshness of early pieces like the Piano Variations with the more popular manner of his 1930s ballets. In the first movement there is dissection rather than development, the themes breaking up into their component parts; but disintegration is followed by reassembly along new lines, the initial ideas being found on recapitulation to have grown in size and nobility. Carter's first entirely personal work, his Sonata (1945–6) brings together aspects of Ives and Copland. Certainly there is Copland in the hugely resonant opening gesture and in the rapid fourths-founded *survolé* passages. Yet Carter makes something very different of them, chiefly because of the ways these sharply divergent ideas interact, becoming much freer in tonality as they do so.

There seems less point to the music on Feinberg's CD, eloquent advocate though he is. The pieces by Amy Beach, who died in 1944, are competent essays in the *lingua franca* of late Romanticism, as are those by

our contemporary Robert Helps with his approximations to the styles of Rachmaninov, Ravel and Fauré (this last recurring on O'Reiley's disc). Feinberg also has some Gottschalk, whom, ever since Eric Thacker's pioneer writings in *Jazz And Blues* nearly 20 years ago, we have usually thought of as a 19th-century precursor of ragtime. But that applies only to part of his output, and the items here are impersonal fragments of note-slate Romanticism.

If Gottschalk was elsewhere pre-ragtime then Richard Rodney Bennett's "Noctuary" is post-ragtime, being a substantial and very fine set of variations on Joplin's "Solace". Again beautifully played by McCabe, this might as well be filed under Third Stream, not least because that term annoys certain



people so much. So might the five movements of "The Invisible Drummer" by André Previn, whose status as a composer tends to be forgotten, and at least the Blues and Toccata Rag of George Rochberg's "Carnival Music". The longest of McCabe's pieces is "Phrygian Gates" by John Adams, with which he occupies 31'01" as against the 25'48" of O'Reiley, who also includes this. Temptations are meant to be resisted, I know, but it is hard not to push the fast-forward button during this work's stanchless repetitions.

MAX HARRISON

THE WORD on the *Nightmares'* first full-length, before it arrived, was that we were about to enter the scariest stripped-down 'core black Techno zone, more abstractly bleepy (ie blacker) than anything Sheffield – Techno's world-central, for the moment – had yet spawned. Science, sound and beat would be redefined. Also dance. Sequenced serialism, or best boogiew-down equivalent.

Well, that we still have to look forward to. *Word* is pinpoint precise, but it isn't really Techno. Not stripped down nor abstract: not 'core'. Too much singing. These are mostly short songs (the singles cut down to LP-friendly length), another none too Techno characteristic:

Sade one slithers off into the mood-layers of "Nights Interlaid", sculpted from organ patter, string swell and ruminating wordless voice: it's a neat little misdirection. What they're actually best with is machine-rhythm, and running thus between lapped blocks of sample-music that real-time players can't – yet – replicate (join up a loop in a well-chosen place, you get focus on attacks and decays in tone-colour that fingers and lips were fashioned).

It's too rich, too choppy. They're young, they're showing off, throwing out all their ideas unsorted and in one go. More House-bound mix-extension on fewer cuts would discipline composition logic: maybe unleash every time an "Aftermatch", with its naggy little vanished cycles and delirious stacked-up-and-circling clone-echo voices, or a "Dextrous", with its austere boop-beep-bap-puff rifle. Science, sound and beat, confidently awaits Wax step two.

HOPEY GLASS

HOUSTON PERSON / RON CARTER*Something In Common*

Mute 600653 CD

JOHNNY LYTHE*Happy Ground*

Mute MCD 5387 CD/MC/LP

DAKOTA STATION*Dakota Station*

Mute MCD 5401 CD/MC/LP

CHARLIE EARLAND**NIGHTMARES ON WAX***A Word Of Science:**The 1st & Final Chapter*

WARPLP4 CD/LP/MC

Whip Appeal

Muse MCD 5409 CD/MC

HOUSTON PERSON*Why Not!*

Muse MCD 5433 CD/MOLP

"I THINK he's the last link with the Gene Ammons school of saxophone playing," says Ron Carter (perhaps forgetting Stanley Turrentine) in the notes to the 1989 duo album. This is the earliest of five recent outings, listed chronologically, all produced by Person and featuring his horn.

More of a South Carolina Person by birth, Houston's "Texas tenor" sound betrays his allegiance to Illinois Jacquet as well as to the Chicagoan Ammons. The choice of two items from Rollins's *Saxophone Colours on Sowering In Cowrie*, therefore, doesn't indicate a similarity (merely a homage) to Sonny, likewise the versions of "Joy Spring" and "Anthropology" include reference to qualities that predate the tunes. While the instrumental facility has contemporary touches, even the combination of tenor and straight-ahead bass is inspired by the 1945 meeting of Don Byas and Slam Stewart, rather than any more modern event.

Fewer points for the slightly frayed vocalism of Stanon (despite occasional apt fills from Person), or for Earland (despite Johnny Coles) or Lytle. Even in such no-frills settings, each nominal leader gets to be a drag long before these LP-length albums are over. Like the two last-named, the group on Person's own latest issue contains a Hammond B3, manned here by young Joey DeFrancesco; with the contributions of the Harper Brothers (Philip being as entertainingly risk-taking as recently as Ronnée's), this one has a rough edge but no weak spots.

Well, almost. The producer is sometimes not strict enough with himself about tuning up, but he consistently makes the best impression. Spare a thought for the once famous Rick Laird, who took the photographic impressions for all five albums.

BRIAN PRIESTLEY

DER PLAN*Die Peitsche Des Lebens/The Whip Of Life*

Ata Tak WR50/TA 03750 26 CD/LP

VARIOUS*City Space – Ata Tak Electro Compilation*

Ata Tak/EIA 03751 26 CD

THERE WAS never a moment when the strange, weird, wonderful and ever so slightly frightening world of Düsseldorf's Der Plan was anything less than real. Their world – and the awry universe of the Ata Tak label they created to contain it – is constructed from the leftovers of a fast used-up planet washed up on their doorstep.

They are Europe's foremost cargo cultists. If they don't exactly venerate discarded or lost souvenirs and exotica brought back from a world beyond the end of the street by tourists and sailors alike, they do ascribe them equal value with the art objects, relics and fetish items they've been mass-produced from. Over the past decade Der Plan have



refined a unique, funny, perverse and perversely affecting vision for German pop by casting a squinty eye over the clutter and clatter of its imports. In the post-industrial west, authenticity of the alien experience for the majority is more accurately summarised by such exotics as the Residents, Yma Sumac, Les Baxter (whose capital Capitol album *Ritual Of The Savage* figures in Der Plan's artwork) and Martin Denny than Joseph Conrad. Regardless of the de-based (as in displaced) nature of their source materials, Der Plan's great alchemical trick has been to redeem the very real emotions children and adults – including themselves – invest in such kitsch.

They've transfigured kirsch's lapsed standards into a marvellously languid, slack-rhythmed latrine shuffle to carry along songs as probingly funny, sexy and amoral as Spanish director Pedro Almodóvar's tongue-deep-between-cheeks farces (check the fabu-

lous detumescing cha cha chug of "Simple Sample"). Using samplers to retrieve exotic atmospheres and sounds from Baxter and Denny's like, Der Plan's music now spills over their earlier electronic tone limitations into forms as different as ersatz American – North and South – pop, jazz (all anyone needs to know about that summarised in the 2:40 min. of "Live At The Village Vanguard") and death metal, and nostalgic German Schlager. But this is more than a variety show beamed from Der Plan's heavily stocked junkshrine. It is their most coherent, certainly most enjoyable and possibly best excursion yet through the Disneyfication of the 20th Century.

Der Plan's Moritz Reichelt and former Holger Hiller protégé Andreas Dorau compiled *City Space* with a view to presenting contemporary German electronic dance after Kraftwerk. Indeed, an outfit called Kernkraftwerk/Nuclear Power Station relaunch "Autobahn" here as revved-up funk. The humour and warmth which the 14 mostly unknown contributors bring to a functional form ironically bereft of pleasure – despite all its goodtime exhortations – leads one to suspect the whole thing being mostly Der Plan playing charades. Regardless of who My Wonderful World and Tiny Sexy People really are, its strike rate is phenomenally high for a compilation. And none betrays Ata Tak's vision of a world as a strange and weird place that is sometimes wonderful to be in.

HERA KOPE

(Ata Tak records are usually obtainable through Rough Trade Shop, Talbot Road, London W10 or, mail order from Ata Tak, Maerkischstrasse 16, D-4000 Düsseldorf 12.)

JOHN SACHSE /**DAVID MOSS /****GEORGE LEWIS**

Berlin Tango

ITM 1448 CD

SINCE YOU'RE never quite sure what George Lewis is doing with his trombone, it isn't at all clear whether and where he performs on the first five tracks. He's certainly there at the opening of the long "Jaroslaw Ephraim", alternating deep purrs and growls in duo with Sachse and high trumpeting runs that underline his formidable (and occasionally

abused) technique with the slide. Playing outside as well as in, he lends tremendous emotional variety to equivalent notes, sounding at moments almost uncannily like Jack Teagarden, and then moments later like Bob Brookmeyer in one of those drummerless Giselle trios, with Sachse just squeezing into Jim Hall's shoes.

Drummerless? Ah yes. Moss's absence on 'Jaroslav Ephraim' alters the temperature and atmospheric pressure rather, uh, drastically. The opening five tracks, notably 'Der Wohltemperierte Schraubenzieher' and the long 'Für Karl Kraus' are satirical cabaret of a high but mildly nerve-stretching order. I lost track of Moss slightly after the first two Dense Band albums (which I loved to the despair of my editorial betters). For someone as outwardly anarchic, he has derived a remarkably consistent and adaptable voice, together with a tremendously dramatic presence that overrides some of his more tiresome gestures. Remarkably, Sachse manages to combine just as effectively with Moss as with an unwontedly lyrical (and funny; on 'Ruckgabe' he chugs out the riff to 'Victim Of Love') Lewis, but he is often reduced to rather self-consciously generic strums — tangos, waltzes, flamenco — underneath Moss's loudspeaker delivery and pick-up-stix drumming.

BRIAN MORTON

PHAROAH SANDERS

Welcome To Love

Timeless SJP 558 CDEP

SAXOPHONIST PHAROAH Sanders has been enjoying a fruitful renaissance in the late 1980s, playing in a more controlled but still recognisable version of the Coltrane-ish ferocity which marks his work in the 1960s.

This set, sub-titled "Pharoah Sanders plays Beautiful Ballads," takes a different line. Ballads, which dictate their own terms of performance more than any other jazz form, have always seemed to me to reveal an immense amount about a musician, but without necessarily influencing our perception of his essential stylistic characteristics.

The obvious exceptions — Webster, Young, Gerz — were those who made the ballad their principal form of expression. Sanders falls more into the Coltrane category, and this collection is likely to be viewed, like Trane's *Ballads*, as a fascinating adjunct to

the central flow of his music.

In the main, Sanders handles the material with the tonal lustre and expressiveness of a great ballad player, and throws in some trademark touches, including his now mandatory playing-without-blowing trick, as in the closing bars of "Say It (Over and Over Again)" and "The Bird Song".

The rhythm section of William Henderson on piano, Stafford James on bass, and Eccles-ton W Wawnright on drums, is more than up to the job. The tunes are all standards, with the exception of J J Johnson's "Lament" and Mal Waldron's "Soul Eyes", plus a rather harsh solo version of his own tune "The Bird Song." No gear leap into the unknown, but a safe recommendation.

KENNY MATHEISON



ANDY SHEPPARD

In Co-Motion

Arilles AN8766 LP/MC/CD

SOME PEOPLE will be outraged that jazz star Andy Sheppard has released a fusion record. With Courtney Pine touring a soul outfit and Steve Williamson adopting M-BASE funk: who will be left? On the other hand, those who thought Sheppard's first quartet was not strong enough to stretch him will welcome a chance to hear him in a new context.

However, 'stretching' is not a word that can be applied to *In Co-Motion*. "ASAP" begins promisingly enough with some furious timbales from Dave Adams. Topped by Claude Deppe's muted trumpet, the immediate resonance is *Bitches Brew*. But this raises unfortunate comparisons. Two obstacles: Steve Swallow's production (all middle, warm and treacle-thick) and Sheppard's fussy

arrangements. Both prevent the players gaining momentum. The sections — funky bit, clever bit, lyrical bit — give the set a programmed, "light music" feel. The synth washes (Steve Lodder) and bass playing (Sylvain Richardson) seem anonymously professional.

"Eargliding" has a predictable Eberhard Weber-type bass intro, a shimmeringly pretty theme and then chugs into a late-jazz bossa. After Billy Jenkins' merciless attention, it is hard to believe young British players can take the style seriously. "Let's Loange" has an infectious Latin lilt and Sheppard plays a little bouncy tenor out of the Ben Webster bag. The solo's climax is impressive, but this genre cannot be saved by solos because they do nothing to assist the cause of the music. He is not helped by Lodder's paprika samples — quite literally the sound of the supermarket. "Punk" is an engaging but cluttered attempt at carnival music.

The mainstream is full of perilous currents. Sheppard is a fine player, but there is nothing here that Freddie Hubbard and Grover Washington Junior and Hank Crawford have not done (are still doing) with more sex and soul and swagger.

BEN WATSON

MEL TORMÉ /

GEORGE SHEARING

Mel and George "Do" World War II

Concord CCD4471

MOSTLY THESE songs are poor. An Ellington medley aside, they are Tin Pan Alley's mediocre contributions to the hostilities, with just one, "Lili Marlene", from the opposing forces. Shearing does this and "I've Heard That Song Before" with Neil Swanson on bass, and only a churl could fail to appreciate the taste and refinement of his playing, above all in the unaccompanied "I Know Why". Nor are there many questions to ask about his technique in the face of solos like the one in "Love". True, he is no longer ambitious, but you are probably young enough to believe a birthdate of 1919 is sufficient explanation of that.

Tormé, however, is still anxious to keep up high standards, and though belonging to the 1925 vintage he retains all of his voice. It

has a beautiful timbre, warm and husky – something of the "Velvet Fog" still lingers. Also, it is capable of a quite striking range of expressive nuance; note has sensitive inflections in Ellington's "I Didn't Know About You". As in the past, his artistry is sometimes just a little self-conscious, yet there are intelligent and musical reshapings of most of the melodies – and a suggestion of "Jumping At The Woodsides" in "This Is The Army, Mr Jones".

At least one of the pieces does not belong, this being "Cotton-tail", which dates from before America's entry into the war. Tormé scars on this, and very well, as he does elsewhere, for example in "I Could Write A Book". Alongside, rather than behind, him Shearing delivers a steady flow of modest invention, as in "Five O'Clock Whistle", and is a sympathetic accompanist. The audience, at Paul Masson's Winery (nr), Saratoga, last year, shows its appreciation by jumping in with its applause before each piece has a chance to end.

MAX HARRISON

allusions to Stitt. And yes, they probably do, but unfortunately at the expense of their own individuality. As a Sinatra fan, it was unsurprising that my favourite track on the album was "You Go To My Head", where Herb Harris' stunning musicality only serves to evoke Frank's marvellous rendition, rather than shedding any new musical light on this ballad.

Tough is not really the appropriate adjective to describe this posse. Competent, yes; talented, certainly; but *sugary*? In the sense of challenging or innovative? Sorry boys. Despite (or rather because of) this, *Alone Together* will slide effortlessly onto most people's CD players. Don't expect to win friends and influence people with this one, but you could seduce a few.

CAT BASS

treat nonetheless. Jimmy Robbins's Hammond organ is especially telling, riffing like a big band sax section behind the brass.

Big Joe Turner began his vocal career as a barmen, shouting encouragement to the musicians whilst polishing glasses on a huge white apron. In order to be heard over the sheer volume of a big band's vast array, Turner's song eschews consonants, discarding any obstacles to the glorious outpour. Dean Martin sentimentalized this sensual, sloppy-drunk shout of joy into a showbiz trick, but no one roars like the lion himself. Big Joe makes all the other voices sound undefended. Hear him soon. BEN WATSON

TOUGH YOUNG TENORS

Alone Together

ANCD 8765 CD/MC

It's not that cover versions are inherently pointless. Just in this case, *Alone Together* features the considerable talents of five tenor sax from the USA, Ben Riley on drums, plus pianist Marcus Roberts and Reginald Veal on bass (both from Wynton's gang). The tenors take turns to pay tribute to the masters, reworking popular and jazz standards, including wicks from Duke Ellington, Thelonious Monk, and McCoy Tyner. The album culminates with Sonny Stitt's "The Eternal Triangle" with all members discreetly vying for attention. It's all fine, faithful material. But why bother with a photocopy when you can have an original?

The mighty legacy of the past has become a burden rather than a building-block for these tenors: the heavyweights' names are bandished liberally around the liner notes, coupled with the less familiar names of the TYTs. Walter Blanding Jr. is billed as reminiscent of Rollins; James Carter "echoes" Gene Ammons, Tim Warfield hints at Coltrane, and Herb Harris is said to make



JOE TURNER

Stormy Monday

Pablo PA23510945 CD

A CD release of the 12th record Big Joe Turner made for Norman Granz's Pablo label – sessions from the mid 70s. As usual, recording is immaculate, letting the swing and R&B veterans (Lloyd Glenn on piano, Pee Wee Crayton on guitar, Cleanhead Vinson on alto and, for the title track, an all-star trumpeter line-up of Sweets Edison, Roy Eldridge and Dizzy Gillespie) whip up an irresistible storm.

It is like eavesdropping on a wonderful penthouse party. The tracks do not have the social relevance of Big Joe's 40s National and 50s Atlantic recordings (R&B classics which laid the basis for rock 'n' roll) but they are a

JAMES BLOOD ULMER

Black And Blues

DW 845-E CD

BLOOD, CURRENTLY calling himself Adamu M A Musawir, is on shaky ground here. "Sign Language" and "Uptown", the only non-vocal cuts on *Black And Blues*, show that his particular magic is still within reach when he thumbs wildly through the strings of his "unison-tuned" Gibson Byrdland guitar and lets the instrument more or less set its own direction, partners Calvin Weston and Amin Ali raging beneath or around the thick electric drones. This simple modal/free formula is unfailingly effective. In concerts these last few years, the Black Rock trio's been varying it with recourse to straighter 12-bar blues, enjoyable but more lightweight.

Now Blood/Musawir, at the age of 50 – too late! – is reaching out to pop music. It's a sign of the times. The wild guitar is reined in, Defunkt alumnus Ronnie Drayton (who had more room to move back on 82's *Black Rock*) sticks mostly to naut funk rhythm; Weston blats a simple snare beat through (too) much of the record. Bob Musso's mix emphasizes the Ulmer vocals. Always a feeble lyricist, he's not getting any better. The rap on "Lady Of Colours" about "Gray girls and gold girls, green girls and purple girls" is plain embarrassing. His socio-political texts – "You got to let justice come – boy hey boy" – make Lenny Kravitz sound like Noam Chomsky. "Tower Of Power" bears more than a passing resemblance, chordwise, scansionwise, to Hendrix's "The Wind Cries Mary".

Overall, probably the weakest item in Blood's discography to date. STEVE LAKE

URBAN SAX

Spiral

EPM Messier PDC 1125 CD

FIFTY OR SO PARACHUTE-SILK-suited saxophonists spilling out of ambulances, jeeps, gondolas, crawling out the woodwork and up the walls, circling the venue in fork-lift trucks, filling – and I mean filling – the air with repetitive horn patterns that have nothing to do with jazz.

Less a band than a guerrilla performance art invasion force, France's Urban Sax have to issue records from time to time to remind the world at large that they still exist (and for 18 years now... no small achievement). But their curiously dreamlike happenings defeat all conventional documentation. Video can give only a hint of the scope of their performances. Audio's not even in the running. *Spiral*'s a soundtrack for an event, no more.

Gilbert Artman's compositions have a dark ceremonial/realistic quality that puts Urban Sax into the same peculiarly French conceptual death glee club that also includes Magma and Art Zoyd and the Belgian-French Univers Zero – all of whom welcome the apocalypse with open arms. The addition of mallet percussion and a 22-piece choir singing rhythmic patterns that dovetail with those of the horns emphasises a connection with Philip Glass's large scale works (think of the end of *Satyagraha*); the overtone singing on "Slow-Turn About Meviana" has affinities with some of David Hyde's stuff.

On compact disc, *Spiral* is a not-uninteresting three-quarters of an hour of music, but it would make more sense to invest in a concert ticket next time Urban Sax is in your neighbourhood. STEVE LAKE

VLADIMIR USSACHEVSKY

Film Music

New World Records 80389-2

USSACHEVSKY is one of a number of American composers – the others have names like Riegger, Schuman etc – long established in the US who are scarcely known in Britain. Hence this 58'11" CD of two of his works is most welcome. One of the founders, with Babbitt, Luening and Sessions, of the

Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Centre in 1959, Ussachevsky has maintained a flexible attitude towards sound sources, and employs recordings of live sounds, analog studio, and computer-generated material. In this he always differed from the originally quite restrictive approaches of the German pure electronic and French *music concrète* schools.

Though prepared for films, a medium that usually imposes considerable restrictions on a composer, both these scores were innovative and have considerable power. The "Suite from No Exit" (1962) comes from the film of Sartre's *Huis Clôt* directed by Orson Welles, while "Line Of Apogee" (1967) is the soundtrack of Lloyd Williams's film of the same



name. Its great musical interest notwithstanding, the former is the usual kind of film score in that it is a background for spoken dialogue, whereas in "Line Of Apogee" there are few spoken words and Ussachevsky's music comments more directly on Williams's extraordinary flow of strange, sometimes dreamlike, visual images.

In both pieces this composer's favourite musical form, that of variations on several alternating themes, is in use, and the themes do not have traditional timbral or pitch characteristics. Consider for example his use of the human voice in "No Exit", going from the electronically modified screams of the opening scene to the voices of distant children etc, and on to the end, where the sound of men laughing is abruptly silenced by rifle fire. No room for more here, but listen to

these constantly surprising works if you can.

MAX HARRISON

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Martin

Factory Fatz 325

MARTIN HANNETT, who died in April, was really the only British record producer of the late 70s to have a mystique attached to his name, a mystique that could be heard in his records. When punk aesthetics valued the organic over artifice, Hannett held the two in precarious balance, creating a sound that was slightly other than of its time – only Mike Thorne's treatment of Wire's *Pink Flag* achieved anything similar.

Hannett's timing was perfect: he crystallised the Mancunian zeitgeist, with the debuts of such seminal melancholics as the Buzzcocks, John Cooper Clarke, Joy Division, and, well yes why not, Jilted John. His name's synonymous with Joy Division, of course, and the parched, uncommunicative space this suggests – take their *Closer*, with its monolithic implacability. If most pop producers are sonic prom-makers, Ridley Scott without the pictures, Hannett was Robert Bresson, making defiantly unvisual records.

But his thing was less a specific sound than a stance. In his sleeve-note, CP Lee attributes Hannett's aural flair to being stoned. Well, maybe – "out of it", rather, with all that entails alienated, but also out of sync, marginal, uncommitted. Many of these tracks suggest a refusal of immediacy. The most basal, Slaughter and the Dogs' "Cranked Up Really High", stands as a totemic punk effort, anonymous, not-quite-clueless, but unwilling or unable to cohere as a complete noise – not through incompetence, simply because it can't be flogged. Likewise, Hannett grooving – A Certain Ratio's "Do The Du", and New Order's ragged, asceric "Everything's Going Green": white-boy funk on a starvation diet.

In recent years, Hannett began to thrive again, although, in the age of the remix, the built-in incompleteness of all records obscured his own sense of the provisional. Some parts of the story are missing here – his work with Magazine, or his finest, the sublime deep-flock muzak of John Cooper Clarke's CBS LPs. If anything here

approaches the latter, it's Happy Mondays' lush somnambulistic liracy on "Lazytis".

Sentimentality being a side product with such retrospectives, you inevitably catch yourself thinking that Hannert's work was designed with being posthumous in mind – it's remarkable how many of these tracks, despite the earthbound material, sound *haunted*. You may end up no wiser about the man's specific skills, but this record certainly has a sense of occasion. JONATHAN ROMNEY

VARIOUS Black Rock Coalition

Rykodisc RCD 10211 CD

VERNON REID made me change the way I heard music. Because he made me realise there was no longer any *good* reason why I'd relegated (white) guitarists like Larry Coryell and Steve Howe to the back of the bus forever – only lazy punky habit. No path so misbegotten it can't be misunderstood and then creatively misused, he persuaded me. Rightly or wrongly, he dug these dopes. Which is why I adore Living Colour, this gap between what I think I'm hearing and all the gloes I assume I've forgotten how to hear, or never knew.

The BRC, as a self-conscious activist community, committed to a specific reclamation (rock as a music for all, especially those who started it), expands it into a whole zone of similar turnarounds. It also confuses the issue, because with a sampler, you tend to distil community identity from similarities which may in fact be irrelevant, rather than the overdriven pluralist eclecticism that, er, unites the ten so far little-known BRC groups herein. It's fun because it's disorientating, because there are errors of transmission on both sides which sometimes mean nothing, sometimes a lot, plus weird incongruities that nonetheless demand to have heads *av* turn. Think what you have to say "yes" to (above and beyond any artist's right to do anything – which anyway retroactively justifies Zeppelin's robberies), when Michael Hill's Bluesland want to be a cross between Gil Scott Heron and Pink Floyd, or when PBR Streetgang have a guitar-sound like late Gong.

Some of my blissed-out colleagues will hear not the thrill of confusion and old-new demands, but conceptually predetermined, politely over-correct and all-done-before pre-

punk fusions. Historically, they'll argue, "white" rock is as much about promise as delivery, promise which curdles when external/ethical factors restrict its playspace. "White" rock is about resistances that can't be articulated, an appeal metal especially (supposedly) inherits from its black music forebears – this version of black rock, they insist, is all too *early* articulated, a retreat from the quests of Prince, Miles and A R Kane.

Which suggests a whole raft more errors still abroad, about content, form, promise and space, about who's reading what, how, and why. Some are fun, some helpful, and some are dangerous. At the very least, this record provides a concrete way to start softening through them... MARK SENKER



BARRY WHITE
Put Me In Your Mix
A&M 397170 CDLP/MC

This is big Bazza's third album since his 1987 comeback with the astounding single "Sho' You Right", and the romantic, string-swept scenarios of his 70s heyday have long been replaced by computerised confessions that occasionally veer towards bland LA & BabyFace territory.

But White's no fool. He evidently believes that his boudoir persona and uniquely deep and meaningful voice are sufficiently 'real' to overcome the mediocrity of computafunk – and to an extent he succeeds, though he still tends to try to overwhelm the listener with clouds of aftershave rather than a real melody.

Ironically, give him a great song and there's no stopping him. His version of the 1958 hit "Volaré" has to be heard to be believed – brilliantly orchestrated, wonderfully sung in both Italian and English, with an extraordinary basso profundo speech as if from the voice of God.

White's best compositions are the title track, which sets marvellous singing against stabbing LaFace-style 'strings', and the ballad "Who You Giving Your Love To", a typical combination of lilting chorus and overwrought testifying.

The set finishes on a little slice of history: a duet between White and his predecessor in the 70s gold-chain department, Isaac Hayes. Unfortunately their dialogue on "Dark And Lovely" is conducted at such a low pitch that one suspects only dogs can really tune into it – a kind of how-low-can-you-go challenge which White wins. It's a hoot to hear these two macho men serenading "you New Age lady, independent girl", but a disappointingly flimsy song for such a momentous meeting.

The highlight comes when Bezza tells Ike that he loves him. PHIL MCNEILL

fast licks

Bila Kefi sifts through the trash for the diamonds.

ASH RA TEMPEL STARRING ROSI (*Spalax* 14247); SCHWINGLUNGEN (*Spalax* 14248); **ASH RA TEMPEL VI** MANUEL GOETTESCHING INVENTIONS FOR ELECTRIC GUITAR (*Spalax* 14245); **BRAINTICKET** BRAINTICKET (*Belpaphot* 288-07-102). The more beneficial side effect of Acid and Ambient house is a re-awakened interest in the cosmic courtesies of early 70s Krautrock. Ravers used to chill out to an Ash Ra Tempel piece rippled through with a dance pulse, its popularity possibly accounting for these three re-issues. ART's odd ambition was to relocate West Coast guitar blues deep in inner space. *Schwunglungen* is their bluest and most bizarre; *Starring Rose* is a euphoric charter of guitars, fx and silly voices. Later, ART became solo guitar player Goettesching, whose heavily treated *Inventions*... remains a landmark in electronic waveform rock. Nobody knows much about *Brainticket*, other than the fact its fabulous pioneering 1971 mindfuck of a noise for female voice, rock instruments and

roadtrills is a certified cult favourite at Rough Trade. (Spalax, from Distribution MSI, Labastide, Castel-Amouroux, Baudran, F-47250 Bougon.)

VARIOUS THE AERIAL #1 & #2 (*Aerial AER 1990/1 & 1990/2*). **VARIOUS** SOUNDVIEW: SOURCES (*What Next?*). Complementary sound journals, *Aerial* in CD form, *Soundview* on cassette, the birth of these beautifully packaged and amply annotated. Better than their good looks, they introduce three hours of intriguing electro-acoustic investigations of all manner of materials, instruments and spaces. The *Aerial* comps range across contemporary and ageless song forms, landscape percussion pieces and sonic architecture shakers that attempt to set buildings resonating with uncommon noise. Admittedly, there's only so much atmospheric recordings of straitening crickets and womb-like pond sounds you can take before you stop noticing them. But part of the point of such work is re-addressing the idea of the listeners-as-composers, deep-listening their own shapes out of sounds and silences. (Both *Soundviews* and *The Aerial* do PO Box 13118, Santa Fe, NM 87506.)

DAVID BOWIE Low (EMI CDP 7977192); Heroes (EMI CDP 7977202); Lodger (EMI CDP 7977242). His late '70s triptych with Eno masked the last time Bowie really counted as anything more than a sales statistic. Mining a myth of Berlin atmospherics, transcribed as a cornball equation of electronics and alienation, he found a way out of the twin artistic and personal impasse of his cokefame comedown. Really, the results shouldn't have been anywhere near this good. Yet even on *Low*'s gloomiest moments there's a strong sense of the fog lifting in the way guitars percolate electronic fogs. Berlin's changed circumstance have made a period piece of *Heroes* title track, but its pop heroics still carry a powerful uplift. And the album's instrumentals, like "Neukölln", moodily soundscape this city's drabber worker quarters with anger and sympathy. Bowie and Eno were too used to each other's working methods to spark happy accidents by *Lodger*. But the inauthentic Hollywood exotica of "Red Sails" and "Move On" are a lot of fun.

COIL THE SNOW EP (Terry CD180). Ab-

stracted from a track on their excellent, unjustly overlooked *Love's Secret Domain* LP, "The Snow" has been worked into a full-length 36-minute piece in its own right. It started life as an impressionistic blizzard of dancing white dots, which Coil and guest mixer Jack Dangers here join up in a series of different, beguiling patterns to produce five variations on the original. It is by turns cold, splendid, ravishing, and steeped in a sense of loss and longing. You would dance to it if you could take your eyes off it.

MALARIA! COMPILED (*Naïve 006*). Potentially the best women's group of the '80s, Berlin's *Malaria!* never fully realised any one of their many ambitions during their too brief span. Even so, they kept their dispersed

OXBOW



THE BALLS IN THE GREAT MEAT GRINDER COLLECTION

following, scattered across the globe from Berlin to London to New York and Tokyo, in thrall of their dark, intense, at times claustrophobically passionate, if occasionally ungainly marital funk right up to the end. *Compiled* expertly calls the best from their solitary LP, maxi singles and EPs to give boys that rare glimpse of what they missed out on when they weren't born girls. (From Rough Trade Shop, Talbot Road, London W10 or mailed from Moabit Musik, PO Box 620349, 1000 Berlin 62.)

WALTER FAEHNDRICH VIOLA (ECM 1412). Grating against the composition's generic title, Fehndrich, its Swiss-born player and composer, sharp-slids and scuds notes into sparse flurries that are sullenly and painstakingly fixed in space by their delayed echo

Despite itself, it is likely to transfix anyone not put off by its constipated beginnings. The disc's other mode of attack is the equally stern yet instantly appealing hypominimalism of "Viola II" – its frenzy pitched somewheres between Philip Glass and John Cage.

OXBOW THE BALLS IN THE GREAT MEAT GRINDER COLLECTION (*Pathological PATH 7CD*). Oxbow's compelling, ugly vision of hardcore inhabits the slow burning afterglow of some unspecified catastrophe. The music scorches the earth clean of all certainties and leaves its vocalist Eugene, sometimes together with guest singer Lydia Lunch, floundering in the ashes – whether after a hold on life or a merciful release is left unclear. Either way the band's commitment to only the most tormented musical expression produces no end of astonishing twists. "Bomb" is mayadan metal submerged in volcanic lava, "Angel" a bizarre fusion of psychotic flamenco and thrash. You won't have heard much like this before. The faint-hearted won't want to hear its like again.

SINGLE GUN THEORY LIKE STARS IN MY HANDS (*Network Europe NET 020 CD*). Earth-friendly in a way not normally associated with the Vancouver label specialists in techno-splattem (in the name of animal rights and re-addressing the power balance, you'll understand), Single Gun Theory – vocalist Jacqui Hunt and samplers Kath Power and Peter Rivett-Carnac – cue songs with samples of Indian or Islamic voices raised in prayer. The practice would come across jerkily if the music didn't adjust its eddying rhythm patterns accordingly. At times blandly humanistic in a way that reduces difficulty to a headline homily. At best, a beguiling celebration of difference.

STRAFE FR LUFTTHUNGER (*Tarob T019*). Formerly Strafe Fur Rebellion (Punishment For Rebellion), Strafe FR are a Russian-German duo based in Dusseldorf, whose clever montages of taped noise and conventional instrumentation haven't always gelled into anything more than loose constellations of interesting sound clusters. This 60-minute work, subtitled and divided into "10 Catastrophes In The History Of The World And Of Music" (no less!), is immediately more

satisfying. A hammy goth element – either a church organ or the concluding Vincent Price-like talkover – is often the narrative force binding their vari-timed noise producers (random take: where Canadian timber wolves, goods train, male choir, Hawaiian guitars, plastic wind tube etc) to the complex whole. Tip: Listen first before reading up what it's all about. You get further easier and faster this way round.

ADAM BRETT AND JOHN TELFER *BLAG* (*Snape SR003*). The pairing of live sampler/sequence operator with a more conventionally armed partner – here, Telfer's battery of wind instruments – has opened up endless new possibilities in improv. For every dead end the South London duo hit, there's at least one glimpse of breathtaking oddness or beauty. Brett's computer hatching of chimeras out of Telfer's natural noise must occasionally startle the latter, given their variously distorted grotesqueries. Rarely wrongfooted, he swiftly absorbs his partner's shocks into a rapidly reformulating system. And so the music grows. (CD available from Snape, 29 Hunsdon Road, London SE14 5RD, tel 071 639 1971.)

DEVO HARDCORE *DEVO VOLS 1 & 2* (*Ryk RCD 10188 and RYKO RCD 20208*); **E-Z LISTENING** (*Ryk RCD 20031*). Once the novelty of their meccano pop deconstructs and cartoon bubble dystopias wore off, there was precious little left to Devo's planned Revenge Of The Nerds. But true to their nerd nature, they refused to press the abort button on the project. Long after it was no longer funny, the plastic doo doo songs kept on coming. They were prolific shitters in their formative years. On the evidence of these three discs of four track recordings, most everything they did later was demo-ed between 74-77. Here you'll find sickpop classics like "Mongoloid" and their "Jocko Homo" anthem in their untreated rawness. Not untypically, their one okay straight item "Come Back Jonee" features on the useless E-Z listening instrumental set.

VARIOUS STADTGARTEN SERIES VOL 4 (*JazzHaus Musik JHM 1004 SER*). Most immediately newsworthy contributor to the latest Stadtgarten document of the variety and vitality of music made in Cologne is the band led by former Can vocalist Damo Suzuki.

Joined by his old colleague Jaki Liebezeit (drums) and young guitar pretender Dominik von Senger, the lovely keyboard tones of Matthias Keul rounding the sound out, Damo's piece is and somewhat less histrionically than we're used to from classic Can works like the *Tago Mago* set. It's only marginally less appealing for that. Also worth hearing is George Ruby's solo piano work "Enigma Sentimentale". (JazzHaus Musik, Venloer Str 40, D-5000 Cologne 1.)

jazz licks

Brian Pernicely ruffles through
the new jazz releases.

MILDRED BAILEY *SQUEEZE ME* (*Affinity CDAFS1013*). One of the forgotten figures of the 30s, Bailey was really the first white jazz singer. Lighter than Lady Day, an early influence on Ella, less mannered than Lee Wiley (also newly reissued on Bluebird), she was often lumbered like others of the period with inferior material. She makes it highly listenable and, with songs that became (or already were) standards like "When Day Is Done", she's unobtrusively inventive. Side-men like Teddy Wilson, Chu Berry and Johnny Hodges complement the (mostly) excellent remastering of these five small-group sessions.

CELESTIAL COMMUNICATION ORCHESTRA *MY COUNTRY* (*Lo CDLR302*). Previously unissued as far as I can see, a live 1971 performance by ex-Cecil Taylor violinist Alan Silva's occasional big-band. This has an almost conventional formation but with three bassists, two drummers and no trombones, and a roughly equal number of Europeans and Americans including recognisable bits of both Braxton and Lacy. More indebted to *Free Jazz* than *Avantura*, this hour-plus piece definitely has its moments, mainly in the ensembles.

RAY CHARLES *ROCK + SOUL = GENIUS* (*JMY 1009-2*). I actually heard this live French broadcast 30 years ago this month, when Charles had just formed his big-band and half the charts were still being played by the small group. Nearly 25 minutes of instrumentals with Ray at the piano (not including what's shown as "Ruby My Dear" and turns out to be the theme from *Ruby*

Gentry) precede "Sticks And Stones", "Georgia" (with David Newman flute) and the like. Obviously Charles has no comeback against this cheekily-titled release, but my heart goes out to the engineers, flying blind and using the opening numbers to sort out their balance. Most of the music survives very well.

BILLY CHILDISH *HIS APRIL TOUCH* (*Windham Hill Jazz WD0131*); **DON SHEPPARD** *TELL TALE SIGNS* (*Windham Hill Jazz WD0129*).

Acoustic keyboard specialist Childish is less exciting than his associations (Hubbard, JJ Johnson, Diana Reeves) and too much the sessionman; as is his sideman Sheppard, whose own album also includes Childish. 1960s Herbie and Wayne, filtered through Brecker and Kirkland, come out like a third-generation fax. I remember hearing one of Sheppard's tracks while driving on the San Diego freeway this summer, and that's exactly where it belongs.

CHICK COREA *ELEKTRIC BAND* *BENEATH THE MASK* (*GRP GRD9649*). The band's previous epik moved me to such enthusiastic comments (for my last *Fax Licks*) that they ended up on the subbing-room floor. So it's hardly worth bothering much about more of the same.

MAYNARD FERGUSON *MAGNITUDE* (*Marström MDCD712*). The Ferguson six-piece's response to 60s jazz was achieved mainly through his sidemen. So there's a teensy bit of collective improv from the three horns, and about one phrase showing that almost Lanny Morgan had heard Dolphy. But it's all so sanitised, just like the second-hand originals: "Mike's Mike" is a variation on the Adderley Sextet's "Gemini", and "Between Races" (written by Chuck Mangione!) is a Shorter re-tread. Three previously unissued tracks make this even longer than it seemed in the mid-1960s.

ABDULLAH IBRAHIM *MANTRA MODE* (*Ejafa Tipe 888810 2*); **DOLLAR BRAND** *ANTHEM FOR THE NEW NATIONS* (*Dew DC8588*). *Mantra Mode* has automatic significance as Ibrahim's first South African-made recording in 15 years, but both its joyous and peaceful aspects are somewhat subdued compared to his 1980s US septet. Unfortunately the horn-players – like some East European 'demo-

crats" — have a way to go before they do full justice to the concepts here, all by Abdullah except for the 50s "Tafelberg Samba", which he was enthusing about earlier this year. No problems about suitemen on his Denon album from '78; one of many almost interchangeable solo albums, this is still beautiful, indeed unique music.

HANK JONES WITH THE MERIDIAN STRING QUARTET (LRC CDC9026).

No objection to a string quartet as used by Nelson Riddle (Sinatra's *Close To You*) or Max Roach. Here, masterminded by arranger Manny Albam, it's a bit too cutesy and definitely too foregrounded. The "living grand master of the piano" (Geoff Keezer's description which I had to drop from last month's feature), Jones is unfortunately very amenable. If tinkly background is needed, he gives it; if a chorus of improv is called for, you get one brilliant chorus. Frustrating, and nowhere as representative as a forthcoming Storyville trio with Al Foster.

BOOKER LITTLE & MAX ROACH (Blue Note CDP7 84557 2).

Roach's 1958 band with Tommy Flanagan replacing Ray Draper, makes an excellent setting for Little's rare debut album. 20 years old, his individuality is apparent on "Milestone" (the early one now attributed to John Lewis), a couple of spacious standards and one of his original waltzes. Two additional jam-session tracks (from the *Young Man From Memphis* session) contrast him with the more conventional Louis Smith. But everyone else, even Roach on the quintet set, sounds like a bystander compared to the commanding Little.

JACKIE McLEAN Right Now (Blue Note CDP7 84215 2).

This could be the best record in the batch, and certainly made my day. A perfect 1965 realisation of McLean's alternating bridge-passages and simple chord-sequences, it finds Jackie on brilliant form. Plus Bob Cranshaw, a young Larry Willis on piano, and drummer Clifford Jarvis when he was at the top of his Haynes-like game. I'd have thought only Mingus was capable of writing such a moody memorial as "Poor Eric" (Dolphy died the previous year), but it's by Willis and McLean's solo is something sweet and tender. Buy, and start agitating for Jackie to return to the Jazz Cafe.

ARCHIE SHEPP On GREEN DOLPHIN STREET (Denon DC8587). The thing that annoys me about Shepp playing standards is, I suppose, his incompetence. Well, OK, the ballads sometimes come off quite well, as in this '77 version of "I Thought About You", but at any kind of swinging tempo, he doesn't. The uncontrolled timing is more unforgivable than wayward pitching and, compared to David Murray or any of the saxists named in these two pages, Shepp is a well-meaning amateur.

SONNY STITT Sets In With The OSCAR PETERSON TRIO (Verve 849396-2); **EDDIE "LOCKJAW" DAVIS/SONNY STITT** JAWS & STITT At BIRDLAND (Roulette CDP7 97507 2). Stitt was one of the greatest purveyors of



swing-inflected bop, and just lacked that edge of individuality. His flying alto on *Sets In* is sandwiched between the opening half-album of tenor and the three newly discovered tracks from a different (1957) session; highly competent and exciting. The feeling of the '54 Lockjaw duet is more rough-hewn, with both on tenor and backing by the justly forgotten Doc Bagby on organ. This is what cutting contests were all about.

DUNCAN SWIFT The BROADWOOD CONCERT (Big Bear BEARCD34). Not the first pianist to suffer seven back problems (Horace Silver and Alan Clare come to mind), Birmingham-based Swift is well-named. Playing in the demanding stride style with even more demanding flashes of Earl Hines, he sounds less at home in his brief slower passages. Even the cassette has

14 tracks (19 on CD) and a few fewer, or announcements to break the flow, might have been advisable.

STANLEY TURRENTINE LET IT GO (Impulse GRD104). Different from both Stitt and Jaws but in a similar bag, Mr T's beautiful meaty sound parallels his economical lines, the title-track being about one note different from his 1970 "Sugar". This album and a half from '64-'66 finds him with organist Shirley Scott and not especially stretching himself. The inclusion of Ellington's "Feeling Of Jazz" provides a superior version in some ways to Duke and Trane. *Let It Go* is timeless stuff, and you'd be well advised not to.

VARIOUS ARTISTS THE HEATIN' SYSTEM — ESSENTIAL ARGO/CADET GROOVES VOL.2 (Argo Jazz ARC508). I'm all for studying the history of African-American dance music, but not as filtered through the tastes of compiler Kevin Beadle and his punters. Only a couple of these stand up away from the dancefloor, such as Sahab Shahab's "Please Don't Leave Me" (a Clarke-Boland small-group rip-off "Nica's Dream" and recorded in Cologne, unlike the remaining Chicago-cut material). Anyone wanting a track each by Marlene Shaw and Clarence "Gone" Shaw, this is for you.

RYUICHI SAKAMOTO/KAZUMI WATANABE TOKYO JOE (Denon DC8586). Watanabe's guitars (and vocals on the Bryan Ferry title-track) decorate a Sakamoto-led programme that hovers between techno-pop and 90s soul, not to the advantage of either genre. The closing acoustic duo, however, is pure neo-ECM.

LESTER YOUNG/HARRY EDISON PRES & SWEETS (Verve 849391-2). Two and a half months before his reunion recordings with Teddy Wilson, the already fragile Young was backed by the pushy Oscar Peterson trio, with former Basie colleague Edison mediating. The ballad "That's All" sounds as if it was, at least at the beginning, but somehow Lester finds the strength to create new and marvellously simple ideas. Even the previously uninsured closing track is no disgrace and, except on a couple of uncomfortably fast tempos, the Pres is well and truly in charge.

THE WRITE PLACE

presents

a Tribute to Miles Davis

We asked a range of musicians and industry figures who'd been influenced by Miles to give their reactions to his death.

"The legacy of his music is the musicians. He may be dead, but his music lives on." ORPHY ROBINSON

"Miles Davis was to jazz what Mel Blanc was to cartoons." BILLY JENKINS

"My favourite music is Miles' early 70s phase. *Dark Magus* is my favourite album of all time. I love that man because he was such a wonderful stylist, he's been involved in so many different styles, yet it's always him. I'm so pissed off that bastard died!" JAH WOBBLE

"I can't think of anybody else who continually reinvented themselves. And as far as he was concerned it was all black music. He didn't take any bullshit." ROY CARR

"Try to imagine 1959. The town is Vorkuta, above the Arctic Circle – nine months of snow! The inhabitants are Labour Camp prisoners digging coal. Imagine a graduate of the Institute of Physical Culture and Sports goes to this wretched Godforsaken place. And meets a young man. In the course of the conversation, the young man mentions he has a Miles Davis record. Imagine how many hours were spent, listening to this record! It made my year." LEO FEIGIN

"Hearing *Kind of Blue* for the first time was like that first encounter with Stravinsky's "Rite Of Spring". In fact for me Miles was like Stravinsky – someone who continually reinvented music. This attitude to music is both inspirational and an ideal." STEVE MARTLAND

"When I think of Miles I always remember that he went fearlessly wherever his ears and instincts, his intelligence and vision, his soul and heritage took him. And wherever that was, no matter how futuristic or spaced or cerebral or metallic, there was always the blues, the voice." ELLIOTT SHARP



"Even though his physical presence may have left us, his spiritual presence will always be with us. The immortal Miles Davis was always on the edge of new musical explorations. If not setting the trends, he was sowing the seeds by encouraging younger musicians to realise their potential. His persistent endeavours to be with the music even though ill health showed the love of music that he had."

"The world has definitely been a better place through his music. I only hope that now we do not ignore the lessons that he so readily gave to us all." COURTNEY PINE

"My own favourite recordings are those he did between 1926 and mid-1991." DJANGO BATES

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